

American Cinematographer

**FROM
HELL**

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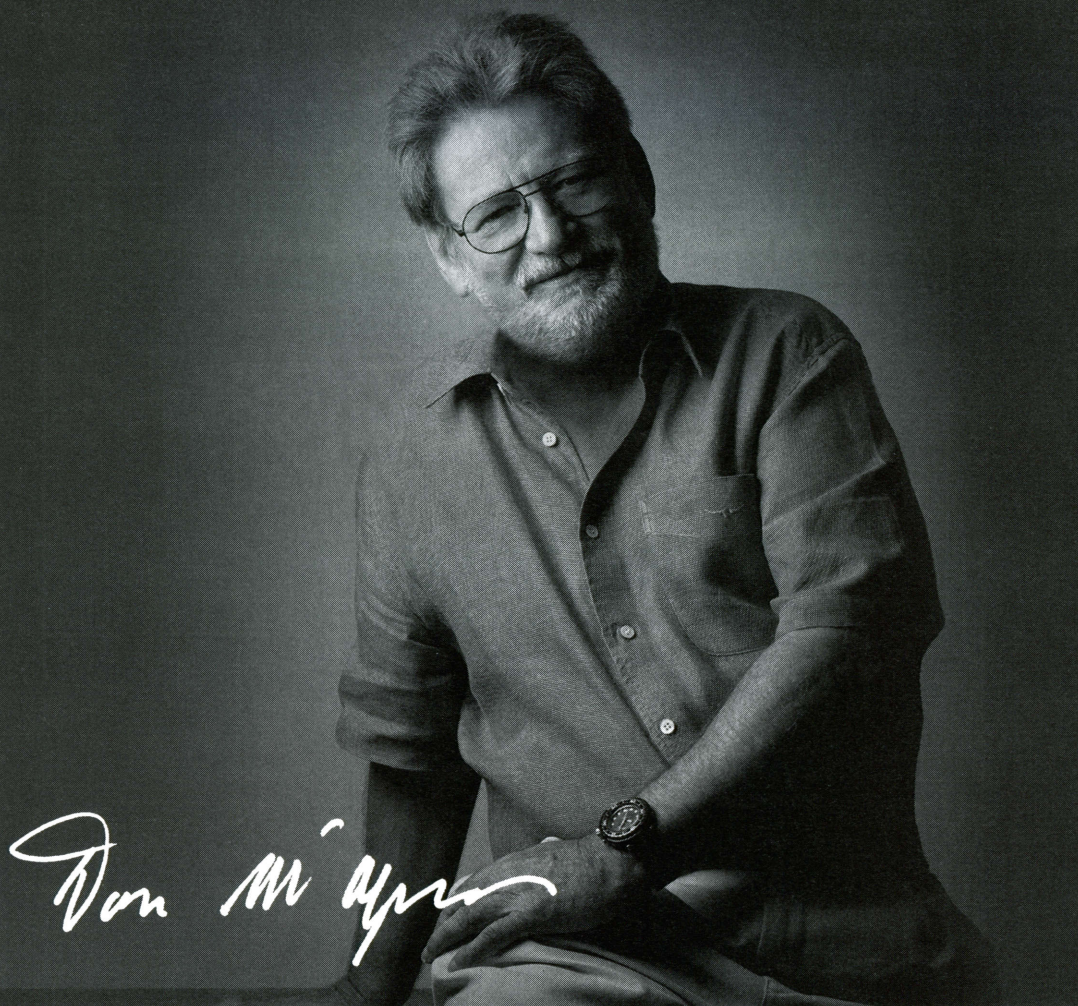
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DON MCALPINE, ASC, ACS

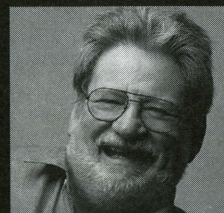
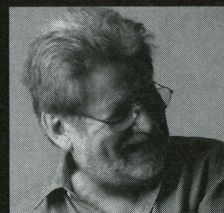
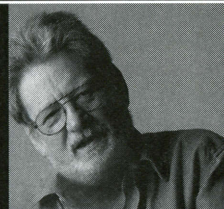
ONFILM

"I think cinematography is similar to composing music. You are born with an instinctive ability and accumulate knowledge and experience. Choosing a film stock is like a musician selecting an instrument that allows you to hit the notes you want to play. There is a tonal quality that you feel. It sounds a bit pretentious, but I can often hear the music while I'm shooting a film. No two cinematographers would shoot any film in exactly the same way. Sometimes the differences are radical, and other times they are subtle. I believe digital timing of films will be the next big thing. It's a powerful new tool that allows us to nudge colors and contrast in different directions. But the fundamental art of controlling light and composition to tell stories which evoke emotional responses will always be the same."

Don McAlpine's credits include *Breaker Morant*, *My Brilliant Career*, *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*, *Stanley and Iris*, *Parenthood*, *Predator*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Clear and Present Danger*, *Patriot Games*, *Moulin Rouge* and *The Time Machine*.

All these films were shot on Kodak motion picture film.

For an in depth interview with Don McAlpine, visit the Kodak website at www.kodak.com/go/onfilm



American Cinematographer

The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques

Features

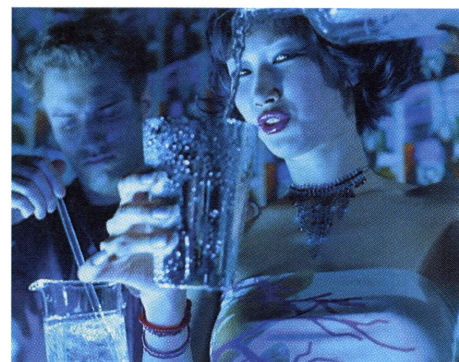
- 32 **A Ripping Yarn**
From Hell explores the sinister legend of Jack the Ripper
- 45 **The Root(s) of All Evil**
 Black-and-white images lend noir ambience to *The Man Who Wasn't There*
- 58 **Discovering Life in Death**
Life as a House dramatizes one man's dream
- 68 **Shattered Lives**
 Orphaned siblings are trapped in *The Glass House*
- 76 **Capturing Ads on the Fly**
 Peter Gilbert brings a documentary eye to commercial projects
- 84 **'Tini Time**
 A new Absolut ad salutes the classic martini
- 94 **An Ode to Teamwork**
 Ford's new campaign blends stylish photography and post effects



45



68



84



On Our Cover: Jack the Ripper haunts London's East End in the atmospheric period thriller *From Hell*, directed by Albert and Allen Hughes and shot by Peter Deming, ASC (photo by Peter Deming, courtesy of 20th Century Fox).

Contributing Writers:

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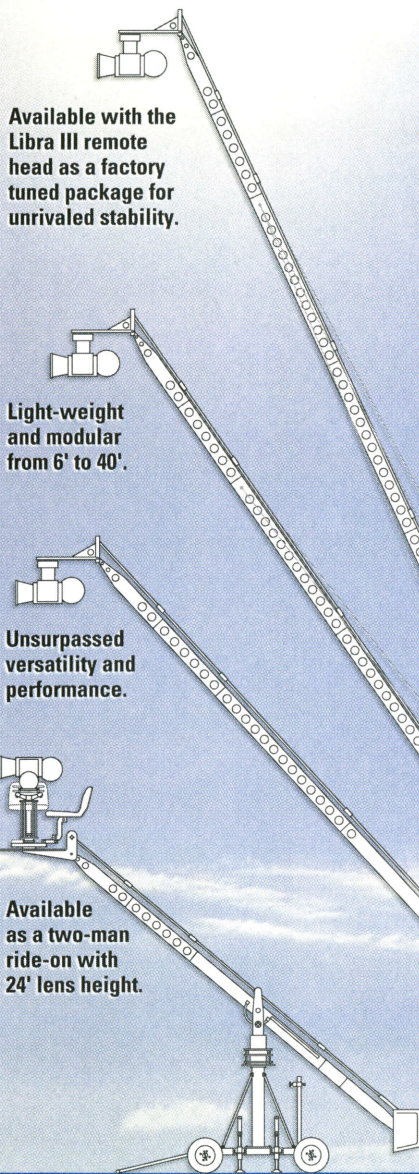
Departments

- 10 Editor's Note
 12 Global Village
 16 DVD Playback
 22 Production Slate
 101 Short Takes
 107 New Products & Services
 113 Points East
 115 Books in Review
 117 Living Pictures
 118 Classified Ads
 124 Ad Index
 125 ASC Members Roster
 126 In Memoriam: James F. Liles, ASC
 127 From the Clubhouse
 128 Wrap Shot

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October 2001 Vol. 82, No. 10
The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques • Since 1920

American
Cinematographer

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American Cinematographer (ISSN 0002-7928) established 1920 in 82nd year of publication is published monthly in Hollywood by ASC Holding Corp., 1782 N. Orange Dr., Hollywood, CA 90028, U.S.A., (800) 448-0145, (323) 969-4333, Fax (323) 876-4973, direct line for subscription inquiries (323) 969-4344. Subscriptions: U.S. \$40; Canada/Mexico \$60; all other foreign countries \$75 a year (remit international Money Order or other exchange payable in U.S. \$). Advertising: Rate card upon request from Hollywood office. Article Reprints: Request for 100 or more high-quality article reprints should be made to Reprint Management Services at (717) 560-2001. Copyright 2001 ASC Holding Corp. (All rights reserved.) Periodicals postage paid at Los Angeles, CA and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA.

POSTMASTER: Send address change to *American Cinematographer*, P.O. Box 2230, Hollywood, CA 90078.

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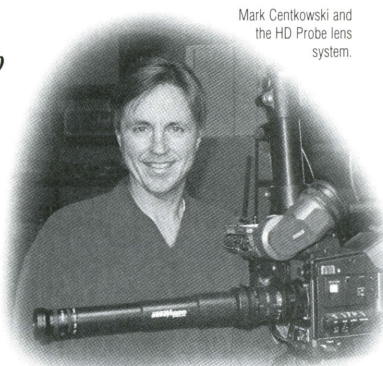
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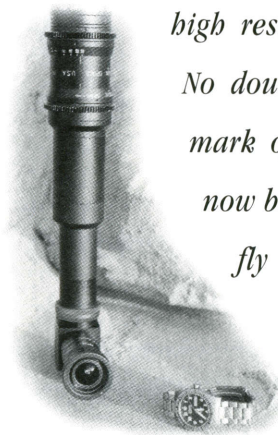
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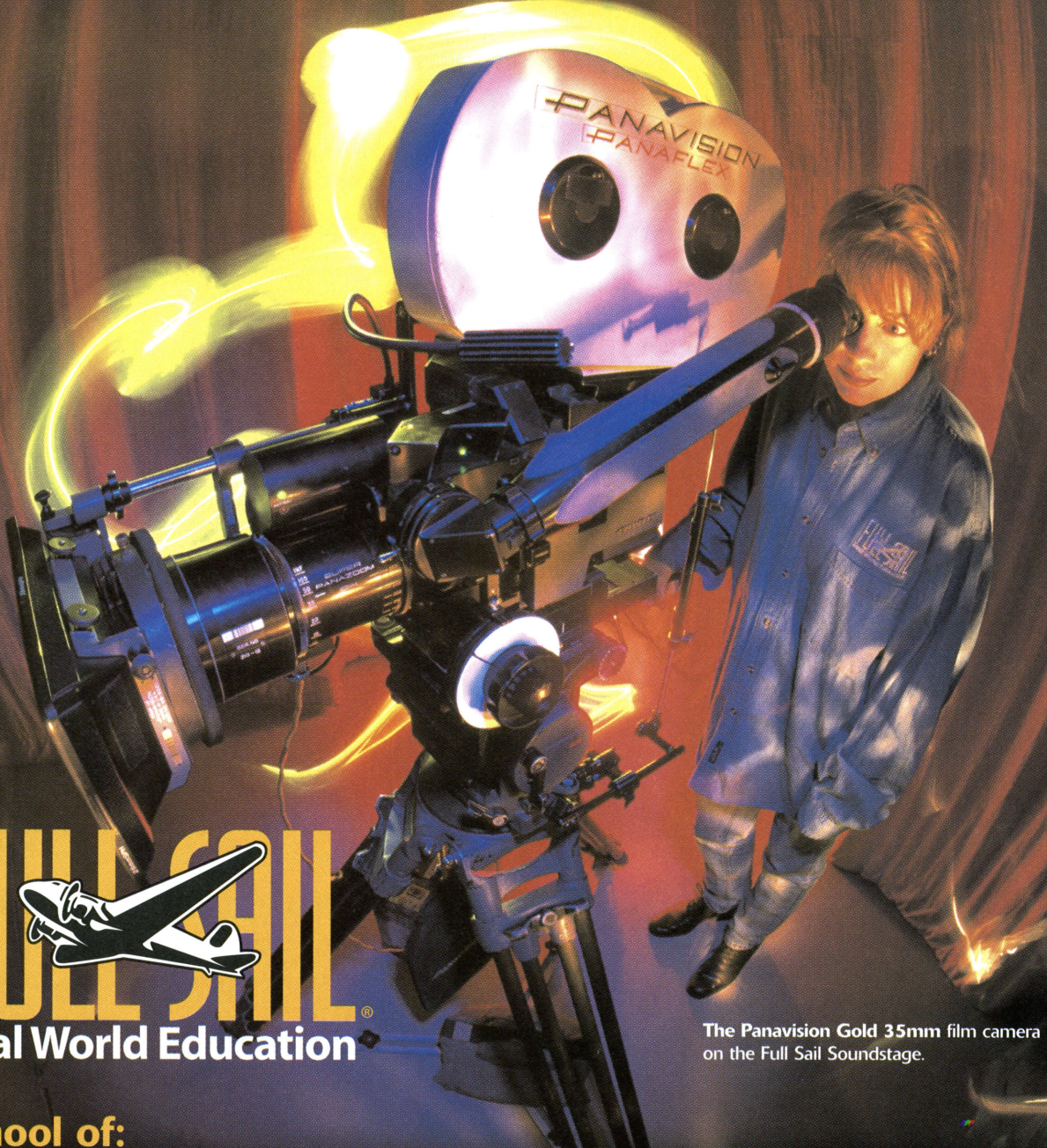
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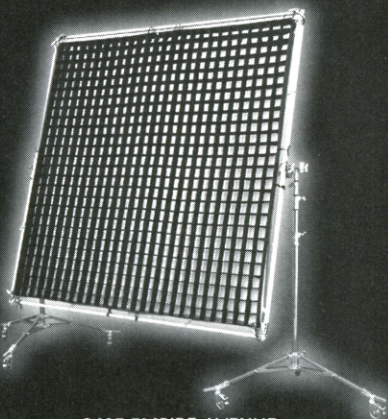
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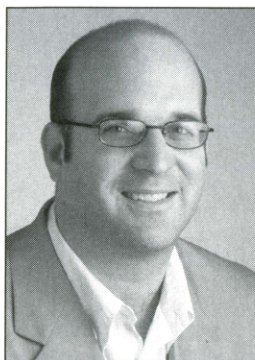
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Editor's Note



This issue of *AC* has turned into a celebration of brotherhood. *From Hell*, the film featured on our cover, was directed by brothers Allen and Albert Hughes, while *The Man Who Wasn't There* is the latest gem from moviemaking siblings Joel and Ethan Coen.

Undoubtedly, the success of these familial partnerships is partially due to the uncanny psychic bond that brothers often share. I can vouch for the validity of this phenomenon, since my own younger brother, Chris, pens both feature stories and a monthly column, DVD Playback, for this magazine. "The boy"

usually knows what I'm thinking before I can even open my mouth to speak, which means that I can rest easy when he takes on an assignment for *AC*. I'm sure this kind of telepathy is even more valuable on a film set, where dozens of decisions must be made in short order; if you happen to have a brother around who's on the same wavelength, those day-to-day dilemmas can seem less daunting.

To help them conjure up the moody, Victorian-era atmosphere of *From Hell* ("A Ripping Yarn," page 32), the Hugheses hired cinematographer Peter Deming, ASC, who has also collaborated with David Lynch on *Lost Highway* and the current release *Mulholland Drive*. Adapted from Alan Moore's acclaimed "graphic novel" about Jack the Ripper, *From Hell* involved the elaborate recreation of 19th-century London streets — in Prague. Given the surefire source material and the filmmakers' meticulous attention to period details, this picture promises to be a bloody good show.

The Coens, meanwhile, delighted their frequent collaborator, Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC, by offering him the chance to render the noir-tinged comedy/drama *The Man Who Wasn't There* in glorious black-and-white images ("The Root(s) of All Evil," page 48).

Another of this issue's themes appears to be houses. Unique domiciles, one a dream dwelling and the other a nightmare, factor into two new and noteworthy films: *Life as a House*, directed by Irwin Winkler and shot by Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC ("Discovering Life in Death," page 58), and *The Glass House*, directed by Daniel Sackheim and shot by Alar Kivilo, CSC ("Shattered Lives," page 68). In our zeal for details, we pondered calling in Bob Vila as an editorial consultant, but he was busy sanding a porch.

The third "subject of the month" is commercial cinematography. Our special section on this topic, which begins on page 76, explores several adventurous approaches to that venerable blend of art and commerce, the television ad.

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Executive Editor
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Global Village

Waging War in Kauai

by Bob Davis

For scenes depicting the Japanese POW camp in *To End All Wars*, director of photography Greg Gardiner had to design a lighting plan that suggested the absence of electricity. Apart from real firelight created by both large and small sources, two Dinos served as stand-ins for moonlight.

Based on the World War II memoirs of Ernest Gordon, *To End All Wars* aims high despite its relatively low budget. Shot by Greg Gardiner and directed by David Cunningham, the film is set in a remote POW camp where Japanese captors coerce a band of prisoners to build a railroad through the Burmese jungle.

The increasingly deranged Maj. Ian Campbell (Robert Carlyle) leads the camp's desperate-to-escape faction. Capt. Ernie Gordon (Ciarán McMenamin) and fellow prisoner and Shakespeare scholar Dusty Miller (Mark Strong) establish a liberal-arts night school in a morgue, stressing dignity and inner strength in the face of slavery and starvation. American Lt. Tom Rigden (Kiefer Sutherland) plays both sides, setting up a black market that deals indiscriminately in alcohol, weapons and texts by Plato.

Gardiner, whose credits include the stylish black-and-white indie film *Suture* (see *AC* July '94) and the forthcoming *Men in Black 2*, knew that *To End All Wars* called for a gritty, organic look. He wanted "to hide the filmmaking process's massive machinery — or, in this case, slightly less massive machinery! In the same way an actor doesn't want you to see his acting, the cinematographer doesn't want you to see his filmmaking. Technique is something that takes years to master, but the more innate it becomes, the more you're allowed to be emotional with your work."

To End All Wars was shot on location in Hawaii, Scotland and Thailand. Most of the principal photography took place in a three-acre POW camp set built on Kauai, Hawaii.



In the film, the camp is buried deep in the Burmese jungle, which meant Gardiner had to design a lighting plan that suggested the absence of electricity. He illuminated the camp's night-exterior wide shots — captured on Kodak Vision 800T 5289 — with two Dinos set up on a hillside as stand-ins for the moon. Similarly, simple single-source lighting was recreated with 2K Zips for nighttime interiors, which were shot on Kodak Vision 500T 5279. Gardiner opted not to have the characters supply light sources by carrying around kerosene lamps "because when you're faking night lighting, you don't want to remind the audience where light actually is. No one's going to worry where the light's coming from if you maintain a consistent mood."

For day scenes inside the prisoners' quarters, Gardiner blasted a lineup of four HMIs through the bamboo thatching to achieve a natural, single-source effect. He notes that the problems associated with low-budget production were exacerbated by the show's tropical location: "Light conditions on Kauai were constantly changing, and because it sometimes took three hours to set the extras or to work out a long take's blocking, reverses of material shot early under overcast skies were sometimes done in

the full sun or twilight." Gardiner thought that many of the setups would have to be reshot, but notes that "we ran some quick print tests early on to see how much we could dial up and print down." Cunningham thought the cuts would work and pressed on. But variations in the natural lighting were so common, Gardiner says, "we just decided they were going to become one of the movie's signatures!"

From the outset, Cunningham wanted the film to undergo Deluxe Laboratories' Color Contrast Enhancement (CCE) silver-retention process. "David thought that the vegetation's vibrant color and Kauai's chalky red ground would take the audience out of the drama," Gardiner explains. The cinematographer therefore took the Kodak/Panavision PreView System to Hawaii and shot location stills while Cunningham began rehearsing the cast. The tool enabled the filmmakers to see how certain stocks would look after the CCE process was completed. "We also shot a 400-foot test roll and had it processed, and the results were very close to what we got off the PreView," Gardiner adds.

Gardiner, production designer Paul Sylbert and first-time art director

Photos by Mario Perez, courtesy of Pray for Rain Pictures.

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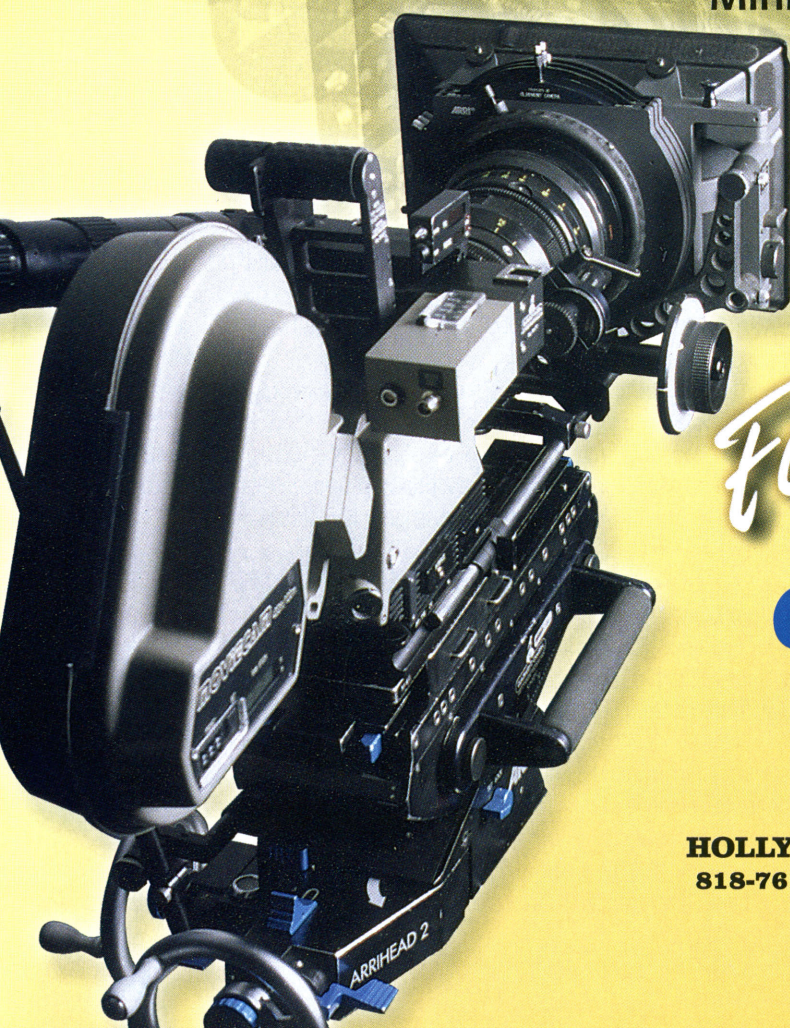
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Patrick Lumb took additional steps to manipulate the film's color palette, almost as though the special processing were not going to happen. For example, they acid-washed leaves on the huts in order to desaturate the greens, and Gardiner chose the more contrasty Kodak Vision 250D 5246 for daylight exteriors instead of EXR 5248. "Money always becomes an issue in the low-budget world," Gardiner notes.

The cinematographer's use of a handheld camera is a key component of the film's realistic style; it was used solely to shoot the prisoners, and Gardiner feels that it expresses their cramped camaraderie, as well as the deepening intimacy that forms the show's emotional core. By contrast, the Japanese are framed in static, composed, wide shots in order to "distance the audience from them and highlight their sense of control."

The filmmakers also employ long takes to help maintain a realistic feel. One such scene, in which Miller is dragged across the camp to be crucified after he breaks ranks to offer himself as a surrogate sacrifice for the condemned Campbell, was shot in five-minute takes, Gardiner says.

For most of the shoot, Gardiner used a 27mm Primo lens mounted on a Panavision Millennium XL. When loaded up with Panavision's PanaTape and Modular Follow Remote Focus Motor, however, the lightweight camera weighed a good 20 lbs. "You have to be in pretty good shape [to do handheld work]," notes Gardiner, who is well over six feet tall. "Because I have extra height, I can just lean when I get in close quarters." Indeed, shorter operators might take three steps to Gardiner's one, resulting in a rougher style — which, he is quick to note, may sometimes be preferred. But Gardiner likes to use his body as a shock absorber, holding the camera away from the shoulder with his long arms. "I keep about 60 percent of the camera's weight in my hands. Shoulders are bumpy, but extended arms function as little vibration isolators."

For the prisoners' POV shots of the numerous beatings dispensed by the



Gardiner takes one for the team. Using an approach that the crew dubbed "Extremecam," Gardiner would don protective gear so the actors playing Japanese soldiers could physically strike him during POV shots of prisoner beatings — and he has the battle scars to prove it.

Japanese, Gardiner held an Arriflex 2-C, which resulted in a style that the crew dubbed "Extremecam." He wore a kayak helmet for protection, and first assistant Steven Matzinger also gave him a pair of hockey gloves. "The point is, the actors shouldn't have to hold back," Gardiner says. "You want them to just clobber you."

When the violence became a bit too real, Gardiner would yell "Cut!" to stop the punishment. "They'd hit so hard that I could hear the camera motor fluctuate and then stop. The lab had to put seven staples in one roll!"

One of *To End All Wars'* most poetic moments is also one of Gardiner's favorites: as Gordon begins a nighttime lecture on Plato, the filmmakers cut to some half-naked railroad workers lit by a bonfire. Behind the camera, the cinematographer twirled a double net finger in front of an open-faced soft light to give it a little flicker. To obtain convincing backlight and sidelight fire effects, he aimed Fresnels through the set's enormous real flames, causing the artificial light to dance. Gardiner thinks this visualization of the Plato's Myth of the Cave is "the most stunning thing I've ever had in front of my camera." ■



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The Criterion Collection, \$39.95

Like many films that genuinely advance the medium, *L'Avventura* was roundly mocked by audiences when it debuted at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival. However, critical support and the passage of time have validated director Michelangelo Antonioni's unique vision, and his tale of the sudden, inexplicable (and indeed, never explained) disappearance of bored socialite Anna (Lea Massari) from a yachting trip off the Italian coast is now universally recognized as a modernist classic. The restless characters of *L'Avventura* wrestle with a puzzling spiritual malaise; one gets the impression that their hold on the world around them is so tenuous that any one of them could have vanished just as abruptly as Anna. Rather than have the characters resort to clumsy speeches about their alienation, Antonioni brilliantly *suggests* the characters' disaffection through pure imagery. As a result, *L'Avventura* remains as powerful and relevant as the day it was released.

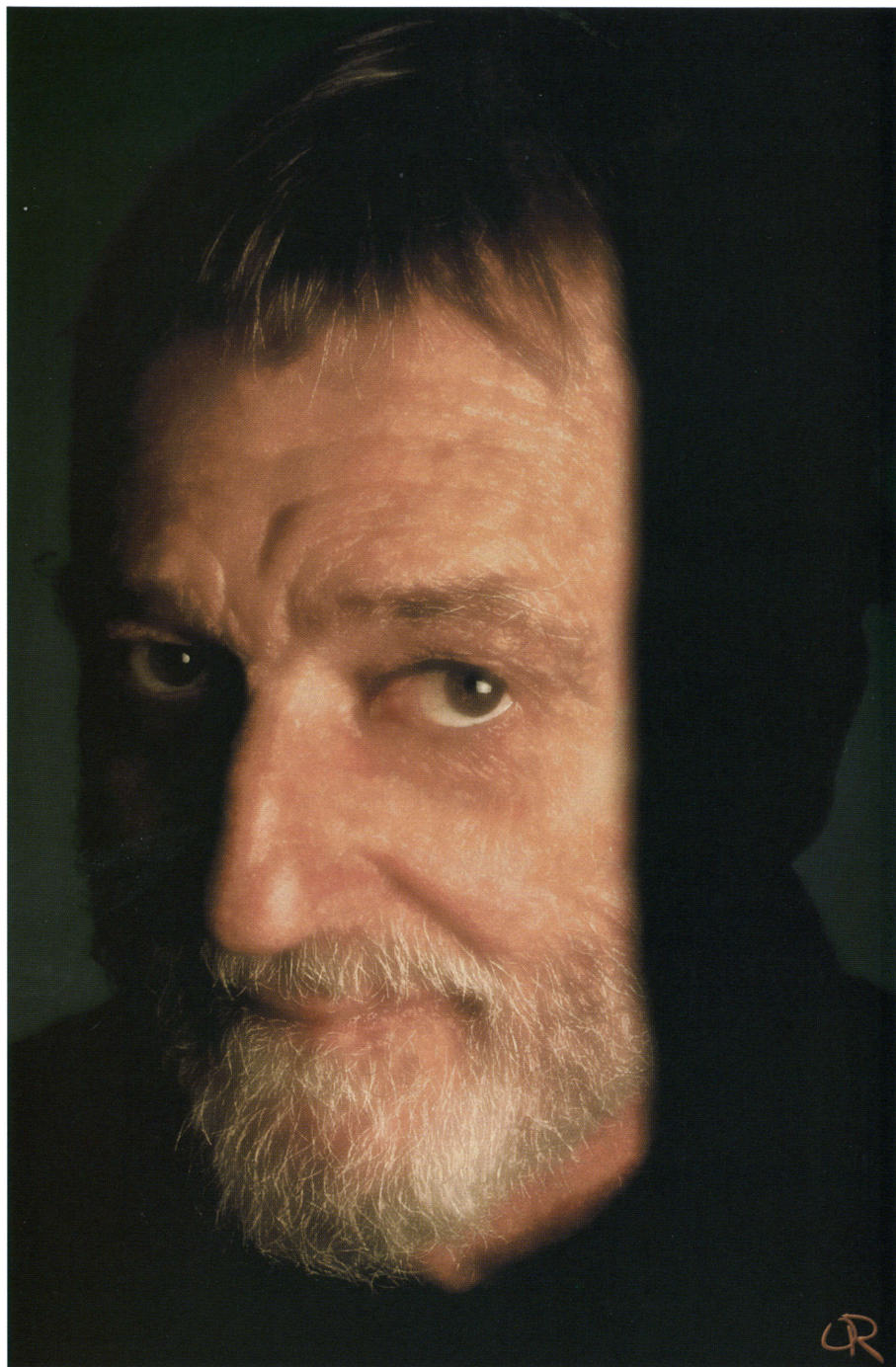
A film whose every dense frame is suitable for museum display, *L'Avventura* is essential viewing for all who appreciate fine black-and-white cinematography. Antonioni and director of photography Aldo Scavarda infused each composition not only with stark visual beauty, but crucial layers of subtext that support the complex themes and emotions evoked by the film. For instance, Anna's shallow lover Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti) is consistently framed against classic Italian architecture as an ironic comment on the character's utter lack of stature and ambition. In another scene, the camera is placed atop the bobbing, swaying deck of a boat to convey the confusion felt by Claudia

(Monica Vitti) after an unexpected romantic advance by Sandro.

Criterion has delivered a DVD that lives up to the intimidating legacy of *L'Avventura*. Viewers can see for themselves the challenge faced by the DVD producers in a "restoration demonstration" that's included among the DVD supplements. The MTI Digital Restoration System was utilized to remove some 50,000 instances of dirt and debris from the print, although at least one fairly distracting scratch remains, cutting a vertical swath down the middle of the frame near the end of the film. Overall, however, the DVD transfer of *L'Avventura* boasts beautiful sharpness, amazingly rich contrast and minimal grain.

Viewers can also enjoy an inspired audio commentary by critic Gene Youngblood, who originally recorded his comments in 1989 for a laserdisc edition of the film. Describing himself as a "passionate lover" of *L'Avventura*, Youngblood solidly defends his feeling that it is one of the few films with the psychological depth of a great novel. Also included on the disc is director Gianfranco Mingozzi's 1966 documentary, *Antonioni: Documents and Testimonials*, in which colleagues of the director weigh in on the enigmatic filmmaker's exacting methods. While not terribly illuminating, the documentary does provide a few rare glimpses of Antonioni on set, berating some understandably cowed crew members in one scene and methodically lining up a composition in another. Lastly, the DVD includes a surprising audio recording of actor Jack Nicholson — who starred in Antonioni's underrated 1975 film *The Passenger* — reciting comments from the director himself, including his rather pompous "Cannes Statement" on *L'Avventura* from the 1960 Cannes Film Festival. The jocular Nicholson also balances out the seriousness of the disc by delivering a warm and humor-

CONRAD HALL, ASC



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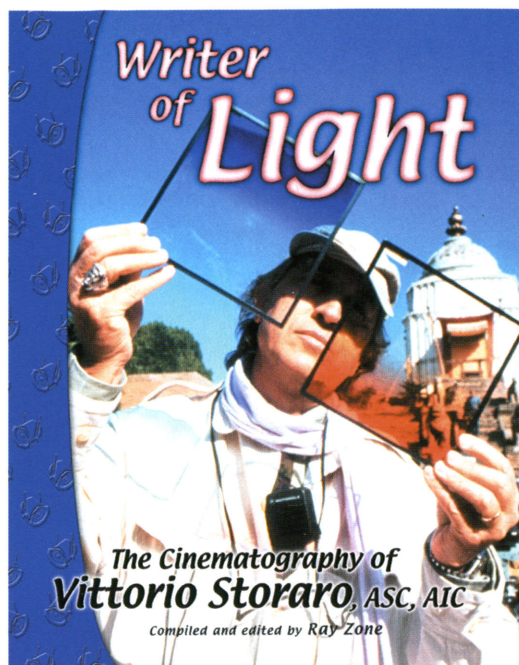
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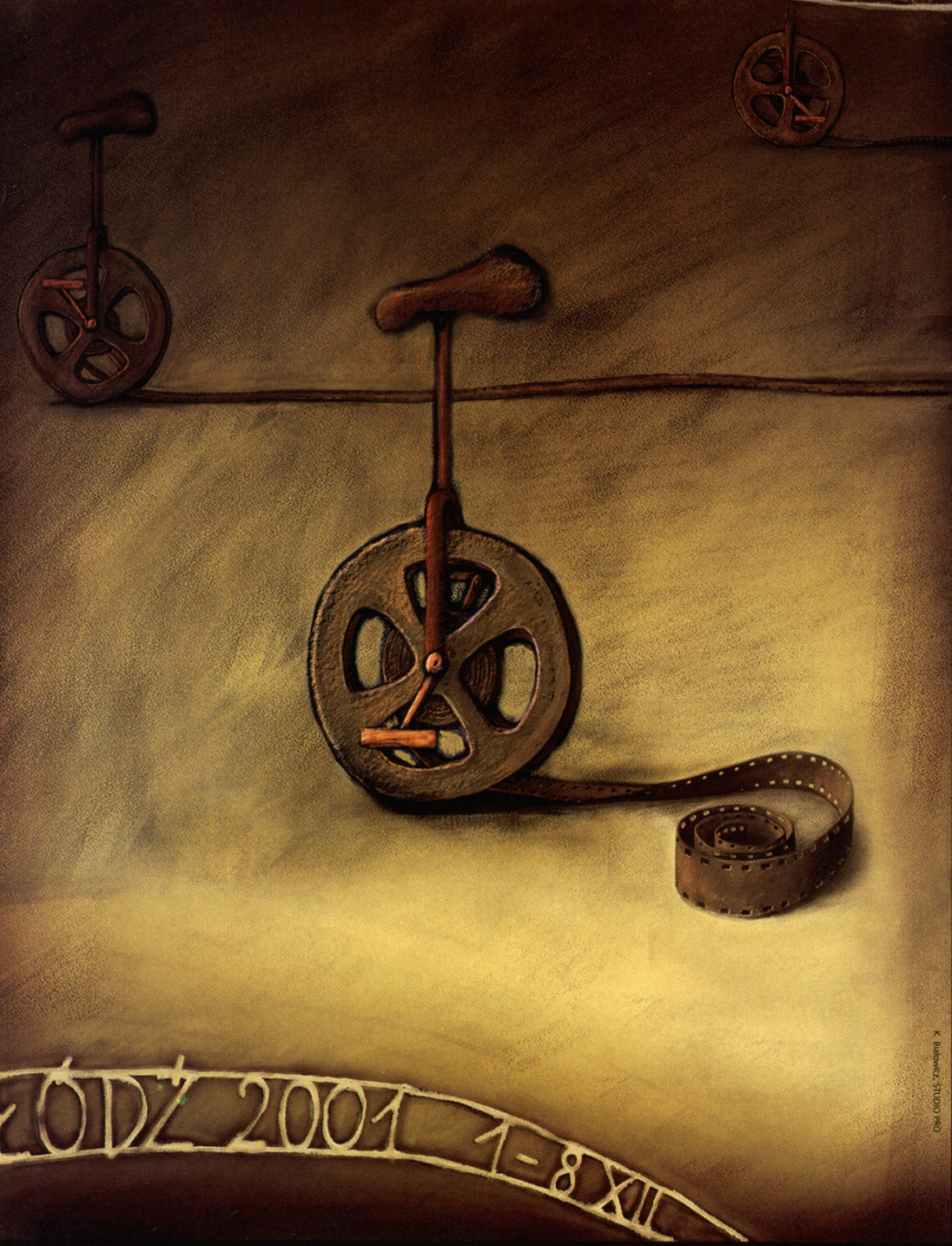
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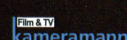
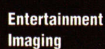
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ous reminiscence of Antonioni's light-hearted side.
— Chris Pizzello

Diva (1982)

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Like *L'Avventura*, Jean-Jacque Beineix's arty thriller *Diva* was greeted with its share of spitballs when it arrived in French theaters in 1982. Lambasted by French critics as a film that was all style and no content, *Diva* nonetheless stuck around in Paris theaters for an entire year before finally finding its audience and becoming an international sensation. It's hard to imagine a similar phenomenon occurring in the Darwinian marketplace that new films are thrust into today.

Truth be told, the film's initial critics may have had a point, but oh, what style! *Diva* tells the playful story of an opera-obsessed Paris messenger (Frederic Andrei) who becomes the target of assassins when one of his illegal live-music recordings is mixed up with a cassette of murder evidence, and this is a rare example of a film in which form transcends content. As a director, the frustratingly unprolific Beineix (who has helmed just three feature films since *Diva*) has a rare gift for mood and atmosphere, as well as a sublime knack for the interplay of image and music. In an interview included with this DVD, Beineix admits that his visual ambition sometimes drove cinematographer Philippe Rousselot, ASC, AFC to "assume the lotus position to calm down, dripping with sweat." Asked by a skeptical production head during the *Diva* shoot if he even knew how to use a crane, Beineix was tempted to retort, "Shut up, I invented the crane!" Unsurprisingly, *Diva* bears all the go-for-broke hallmarks of a first-time director teeming with this sort of chutzpah, including a wild subway pursuit involving a moped that has entered the pantheon of great chase scenes.

Other than Beineix's short (six-minute) but highly entertaining interview and an interesting text profile of the director's erratic career, all viewers get

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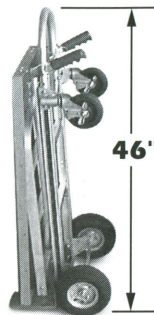
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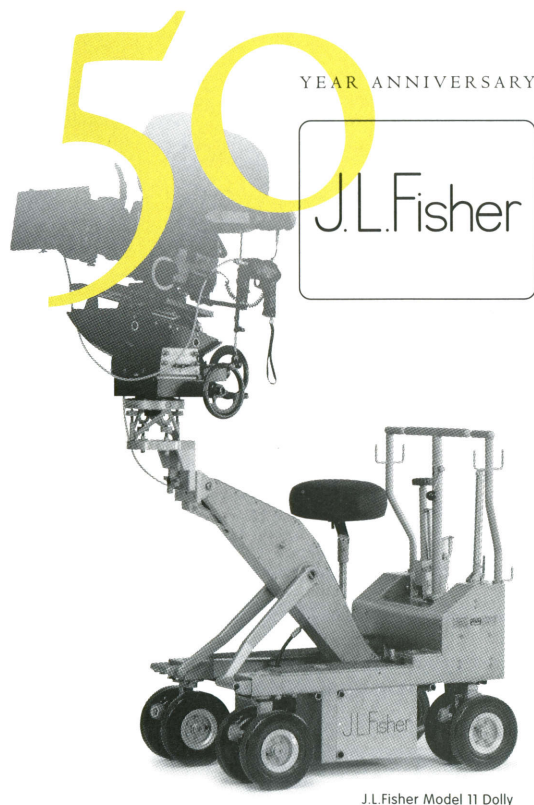
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are an original trailer and an essay on the film by Jay Marks. But it's enough — Anchor Bay deserves plaudits for giving this visually lush film the proper crisp transfer (from original source materials) that it deserves, rescuing its DVD legacy from a god-awful Fox Lorber edition of the film released a few years back.

— Chris Pizzello

Universal Studios Classic Monster Collection

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For anyone who grew up devouring horror movies on Saturday afternoons, Universal's new Classic Monster Collection is a glee-inducing orgy of mad scientists, evil creatures, gloomy castles and ancient curses (not to mention vengeful mobs of torch-wielding villagers). Halloween is nearly upon us, and there's no better way to capture the season's spirit than to camp out on the sofa with a giant bowl of popcorn and cue up the immortal films in this definitive boxed set, which includes digitally restored and remastered versions of *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Mummy* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), *The Wolf Man* (1941), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1943) and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954).

Curiously, some of the discs' menus can only be accessed by hitting the menu button after the movies have begun, but the full-frame transfers are generally free of egregious age artifacts and the soundtracks are crystal-clear. Each disc offers insightful audio commentaries by highly respected film historians (including Rudy Behlmer, Paul M. Jensen, Scott MacQueen, David J. Skal and Tom Weaver), as well as informative "making of" documentaries that trace the history of these spook tales from the original source material to their reincarnations as Hollywood features.

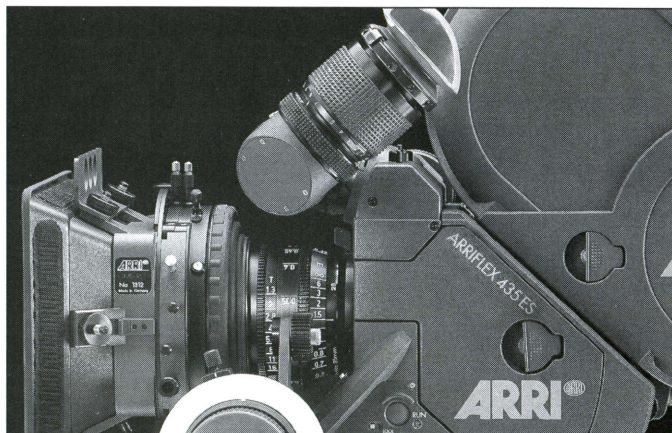
The *Dracula* disc is especially notable for its inclusion of not only the fully restored U.S. film, but also the vaunted Spanish version, which was shot at night on the same sets. Several

of the historians interviewed consider the Spanish version (starring Carlos Villarias) to be a fuller and richer take on the legend, although all agree that Bela Lugosi remains the definitive Count. The disc also offers the option of watching the U.S. version with a moody new string score composed by Philip Glass and performed by the Kronos Quartet. (AC readers will be pleased to note that the documentary on the DVD is dedicated in part to the late George Turner, AC's beloved historical guru and in-house *Dracula* expert.)

From a cinematography standpoint, these horror landmarks present a virtual primer on ominous ambience. The influence of German Expressionism is especially apparent in the earlier films, but all of the pictures boast superlative photography and camerawork by ASC masters such as Karl Freund (who shot *Dracula* and directed *The Mummy*), Arthur Edeson, Paul Ivano, Charles Stumar, John Mescall and Joseph Valentine. Although the 1943 version of *The Phantom of the Opera* doesn't hit as many dramatic high notes as the definitive 1925 silent version starring Lon Chaney, its Technicolor glories earned Best Cinematography Oscars for ASC members Hal Mohr and W. Howard Green. The most modern film in the series, 1954's *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, is still memorable for its eerily beautiful underwater sequences, which were shot by Charles Welbourne under the supervision of William Snyder, ASC.

Taken as a set, this monster mash is a must for anyone who enjoys not only the horror genre, but also old-fashioned Hollywood craftsmanship. For the chiller-film completist, Universal has also released sequels to these gems as "creature double features" on discs priced at \$29.98 apiece. The pairings include *Dracula's Daughter/Son of Dracula*, *Son of Frankenstein/Ghost of Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man/House of Frankenstein*, *The Mummy's Ghost/The Mummy's Curse*, *The Mummy's Hand/The Mummy's Tomb* and *Werewolf of London/Shewolf of London*. — Stephen Pizzello

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Production Slate

A Predator's Conscience and a Phantom Documentary

Gary (Billy Kay, left) and Howie (Paul Franklin Dano) dream of escaping their depressing suburban lives in the raw indie film *L.I.E.*



Secrets and Lies

by Jean Oppenheimer

One of the most talked-about films at this year's Sundance Film Festival, *L.I.E.* is likely to spark debate wherever it plays. Bearing an NC-17 rating, it is a coming-of-age drama about Howie Blitzer (Paul Franklin Dano), a troubled 15-year-old boy who is befriended by a pedophile. British actor Brian Cox walks a razor's edge in his portrayal of the pedophile, Big John Harrigan, who is torn between his perverse nature and an instinctive, if rarely exercised, sense of moral decency.

When it came to shooting the picture, cinematographer Romeo Tirone and director Michael Cuesta had their

own tightrope to finesse: how to convey Harrigan's dual personality in visual terms. A predator who is also a possible protector, Big John had to suggest menace and danger but also stability and safety, concepts almost diametrically opposed to one another. "I never wanted to portray the world Big John is in as a happy place," recalls Tirone. "I wanted to always make the audience feel that there was something sinister in his world."

Although full of bold reds and yellows, Harrigan's garishly decorated house is shadowy and secretive, with the backgrounds blurred or too dark to decipher. Even the two or three brightly lit scenes — such as when Big John descends the orange shag staircase in a

flood of sunlight that bounces off gold wallpaper — have an unsavory quality. Ceiling-mounted track lighting, an existing feature of the house, casts a harsh, unflattering light thanks to the higher-wattage household bulbs utilized by the production.

"As for Howie," Tirone explains, "there isn't a whole lot of warmth in his life, so to portray his world in the first part of the film I used a very light blue filter, a Tiffen 10B — not to make it look blue, but to subdue all warmth. We also wanted his world to feel off-balance, so I used a handheld camera [for his scenes]. The camera movement is always a little bit floaty because Howie is always on unstable ground."

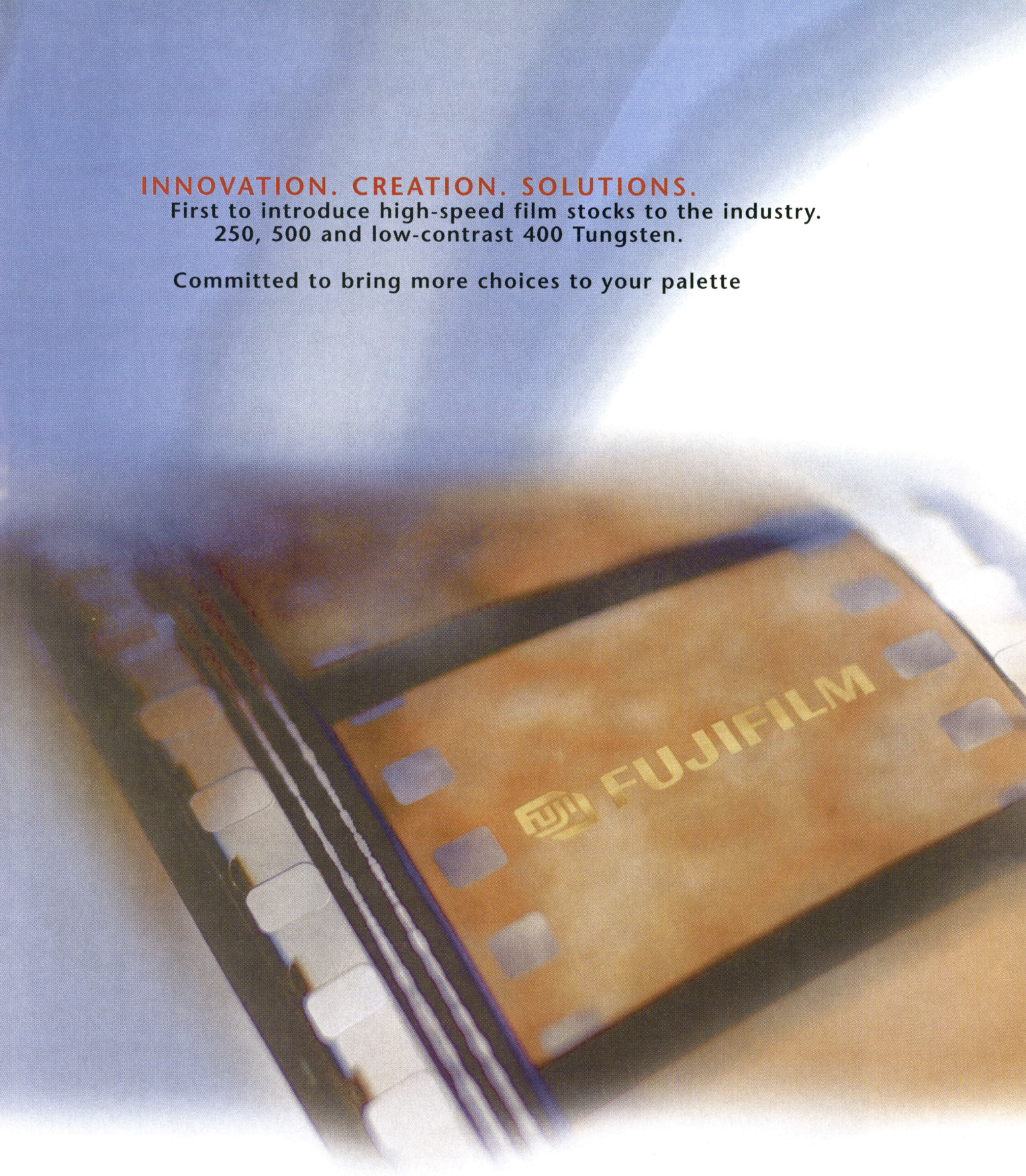
When Big John enters Howie's

Photos courtesy of Lot 47 Films and Romeo Tirone.

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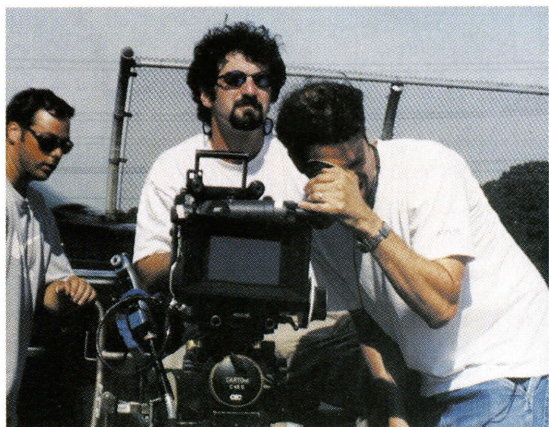
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Top, from left: Brian (Tony Donnelly), Kevin (James Costa) and Howie wonder where their pal Gary has gone.
Bottom: Director Michael Cuesta checks a shot for the film's opening sequence as cinematographer Romeo Tirone (center) and key grip Craig Striano stand by.

life, the camera grows steadier, reflecting the stability that the older man brings into the boy's life. As their relationship solidifies, Tirone stops using the blue filter, allowing Howie's world to become warmer.

This visual change in Howie's world is not reflected in Big John's world, however, because the filmmakers didn't want viewers to drop their feelings of doubt and unease about the older man's intentions. "We always wanted him to [appear] very harsh in some way, so I'd overexpose the light that was on him by one to one and a half stops, and I'd never put any fill light on him. Brian Cox's face is pale white, so whenever you put a light on him, it overexposes a little bit anyway."

Unlike Big John's shadowy but

colorful house, the Blitzer home is cold, sterile and exposed. The walls and ceiling are white and the spaces vast, and Tirone's use of wide-angle lenses helped to ensure deep focus. "Even though Howie doesn't want for anything material, there is no human-ness in his environment," the cameraman observes.

In a stroke of almost unimaginable good fortune, the production found two practical locations to stand in for the characters' homes. The Blitzers' domicile was a contemporary house with white walls and a glossy but austere look. "We didn't paint it white — white walls are a cinematographer's worst nightmare," Tirone says with a laugh. "Rather than trying to fight that look, however, we used it to emphasize the sterility of Howie's life."

The house used for Big John's home was even more creepy and perfect. Wood paneling from the 1960s covered the living room walls, and gold-foil wallpaper hung in other rooms. "In our wildest dreams, we never thought of putting it up," Tirone declares. "It was just *there*. The most brilliant thing Michael Cuesta did was to 'cast' the locations as well as the actors. We found Big John's house through an ad we placed in the local newspaper."

L.I.E. (which is short for Long Island Expressway) was shot on Long

Island on a shoestring budget over 24 days, and the filmmakers had to make do with whatever they could get their hands on. "Michael and I pulled in a lot of favors through our commercial contacts," affirms the cinematographer, who, like Cuesta, comes from a commercial and music-video background.

A Brooklyn native, Tirone began his career as a lens technician at General Camera (now Panavision New York). He has shot music videos for David Bowie, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, New Kids on the Block, Public Enemy and Ice Cube, among other acts.

Knowing that the majority of *L.I.E.* would be shot handheld, Tirone, who does his own operating, requested a Moviecam Compact from Camera Service Center in New York. The shop was out of them, however, and gave him an Arri 535B instead. "We hoped to have the lightest camera and ended up with the heaviest," Tirone notes with good humor. The camera package also included a set of Zeiss Ultra Primes, a Zeiss 10mm and an Angenieux 25-250mm HR zoom.

Shooting handheld not only helped make Howie's world feel off-balance, it also allowed the production to move quickly. "I would try to light an environment rather than a shot, so that we could run through the whole scene and I could move around without having to worry about all the other equipment," says Tirone. "Once we got the master of a scene, we'd go in for any coverage we felt was necessary. Michael and I talked about it a lot beforehand, and we were very economical [on the set]. The film doesn't have a lot of extraneous choices of different camera angles."

The filmmakers managed to obtain a variety of film stocks that were purchased from a production that had just wrapped. Tirone shuffled among Kodak's Vision 250D 5246, Vision 500T 5279, Vision 200T 5274 and EXR 5245. He also used 5285, Kodak's new reversal stock. Limited to just 1,000' of the reversal stock, the filmmakers decided to use it to shoot a short dream sequence. Tirone added a Tiffen Enhancing Filter that brought out the warm tones and

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After befriending Howie, Big John (Brian Cox) is torn between prurient and protective urges.

gave the images "a Technicolor feel"; the film was then cross-processed so that the blacks looked really black and the highlights blew out even more.

L.I.E.'s title is a play on words, as the story is very much concerned with the lies people tell and the secret lives they lead. According to Tirone, the 10mm Zeiss was particularly helpful in visually suggesting that something was just a little bit *off* in the events portrayed onscreen: "It's a beautiful lens, because it gives you the wide angle but its distortion is limited to just around the edges. It's not overt; it just gives you an unsettled kind of feeling."

In one scene in which Tirone used that lens, Howie's father Marty (Bruce Altman) is in trouble with the law but doesn't want his son to know. Tirone used the 10mm for a shot of Marty talking to his lawyer on the phone. Marty stands directly in front of the camera, but we don't see his face, just his torso and the living room behind him, both of which bend slightly along the edges. "We were intentionally trying to suggest Marty's deception, almost as though he was hiding in the shot," Tirone says.

After the FBI arrests Marty, Howie sits forlornly on the curb in front of his house, and the expansive lawn and house stretch out behind him in slightly elongated fashion, "right to the edge of distortion," remarks Tirone. The boy

looks pitifully small and alone.

L.I.E.'s harrowing opening shot reveals a despondent Howie walking along an overpass above the expressway; he climbs onto the narrow railing, balancing precariously above the cars speeding by underneath. "It's an old Charlie Chaplin trick," explains Tirone. "We built a false railing six feet in front of and three feet higher than the real railing. I sat on the arm of a dolly, holding the camera, and they boosted me up at just the right angle so that the fake rail was blocking the real one. By carefully lining up the shot, we could see the cars below, and it appears that Howie is standing on the real rail."

Tirone's biggest worry was a bedroom scene that occurs late in the film; he and Cuesta did not want it to look like a love scene in any way. Howie, who thinks his father has abandoned him, enters Big John's room. Big John informs Howie that his father has not deserted him but has been picked up by the FBI, and the boy breaks down, sobbing in relief. A grateful Howie offers himself to the older man, who rejects the boy's advances.

"We were on the edge of the abyss in Howie's life," Tirone says. "I wanted to pick up what was going on with him emotionally, to really convey the emptiness he was feeling. I chose to do that through darkness." In the very

low-lit scene, the actors sit at the foot of the bed; they are backlit by two Inkie's rigged to the ceiling above the table lamps on either side of the bed behind them, which provided just enough rim light to separate the actors from the darkness. A 1K aimed through eggcrate and dimmed all the way down represented light coming from the bathroom. A couple of scenes later, Big John sits alone at the piano, softly singing "Danny Boy." Again, the light levels were low, with a practical lamp over the piano and an Inkie, offscreen behind Cox, providing a faint rim light. Tirone initially put a 100-watt bulb on a dimmer in the practical, but it created too much noise and he had to substitute a 60-watt bulb. "The scene plays beautifully with no cutting," he reports. "People in the audience suddenly feel sorry for this evil man."

According to Tirone, the show was blessed with a number of "happy accidents." One occurred during filming of a scene that marks the first time that Howie rides in Big John's car. The camera, equipped with an 18mm lens, is sitting on a hostess tray attached to the car's passenger door. Big John is driving, and the camera peers at him across Howie. When Howie realizes who Big John is, he jumps out of the car. "We see Howie grab the door handle, and the door flies open and he jumps out," Tirone details. "The camera, still sitting on the hostess tray, ends up looking down the street, but as the car door closes we see Big John get out of the automobile. The shot [includes] the door slamming shut behind him. We didn't intend to use the shot of the door slamming, but the editor thought it really gave the scene a 'thump' and emphasized the tension between the two characters."

Tirone says the Sundance screening of *L.I.E.* was the first time he had ever seen his work projected, and it was a highly emotional experience for him. "After doing commercials and music videos, it was really liberating to tap into my own creative sources to tell a story," he confesses. "I really feel that I've gotten to a point where I am actually participating in the art of filmmaking."

A *Phantom* Filmmaker

by Ron Magid

In late 1994, before George Lucas even began writing the script for *Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace*, Lucasfilm initiated a video record of what would prove to be one of the most arduous and unusual projects in film history. The initial documentarians included public-relations director Lynne Hale, postproduction head Mike Blanchard, art department coordinator Jill Jerkowitz and anyone else who chanced to pick up a Hi-8 or digital-video camera and shoot what was happening that day.

By late 1996, producer Rick McCallum realized that it was time to organize this material, so he hired Jon Shenk, a recent graduate of Stanford University's documentary film program. "Rick has always had a philosophy of hiring people who are not necessarily fully seasoned individuals, but who show promise and are gung-ho and full of energy," Shenk observes.

Shenk was asked to collate the nearly 100 hours of behind-the-scenes material that had been shot by that time. "George is a filmmaker, and he knows that if you create tons of footage, it's worthless unless it's organized," Shenk says. "So my first job was figuring out a way to organize this footage. But they also told me that twice a week, I would be shooting art department meetings with George and his designers. It was exciting, because I immediately began thinking as a documentary filmmaker."

Although his immediate responsibility was to gather archival footage for a number of possible projects, Shenk says he "knew the project had great potential for a feature-length documentary, so I just started shooting with a finished documentary in mind."

Shenk's documentary, *The Beginning*, will be part of the two-disc *Star Wars: Episode I* DVD, the first title released in this format by Lucasfilm. But when he started, Shenk's dream project was just that — a dream. He was expected to create educational and publicity material for the film's Web site,

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Documentary filmmaker Jon Shenk and his crew capture Liam Neeson and Ewan McGregor on the set of *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*.

and he began interviewing everyone involved about their jobs and their feelings about working on the film. "I'm afraid to count, but I'm sure we did 150 interviews over the course of a couple of years," Shenk says. "My job was to shoot, log and organize. It wasn't until much later that we started talking about doing a documentary." He adds that the interviews he conducted are not included in the documentary.

Shenk discovered a digital Betacam at Skywalker Ranch and was determined to use it on the project. "I made a case to Rick McCallum for using it. I said, 'Look, you know this stuff is going to be around forever, and we should shoot it on the best equipment that we can.' He gave me the camera and a budget to buy another lens and a nice matte box. I bought a sound mixer and a couple of wireless mikes and put together what I thought was a bullet-proof, lightweight and relatively low-key documentary rig that could go anywhere.

"The DigiBeta is just a stunning camera," Shenk continues. "I thought it was the ideal documentary camera when it came out. You can shoot 16x9, which we did. I made a case for doing that early on — if you're making a film about a film, you might incorporate actual images from the film into it, and [this way] it would match better. The miracle is that I didn't have one technical problem the entire time. I really abused that camera! It was 125 degrees in the

desert, and I was constantly pumping up the gain in low-light situations, but it worked great. I was always able to get an image; even if it wasn't the most beautiful thing in the world, at least I knew I had it. There was a real satisfaction in knowing that this camera could get images just about anywhere."

Although Shenk used available light on most of the shoot, he also put together a small lighting kit, which he used primarily for sit-down interviews. "I had a two-case package," Shenk recalls. "One case had five or six Lowel lights and Peppers, the other had three or four stands, a couple of Chimeras and some gels. It was the kind of kit you'd typically see in a documentary interview, but most of the stuff in the documentary was not [lit with] that. If it was literally too dark to shoot [with available light] — like when I was in a tent that was pitch-black inside — I'd put up a Chimera and run it off a generator to boost the light to the point where I could work. But I worked a lot with what was available; I tweaked a lot of Venetian blinds so that the light was coming in at the right angle, and I used a lot of open doors. A lot of this film was shot in dark, small rooms. I was constantly fighting with the ILM guys and the editors about how dim the light should be in the room, and we'd eventually find a happy medium. There are scenes that were lit by the light coming off of a computer monitor!"

His goal was to create a cinéma

vérité documentary in the tradition of D.A. Pennebaker (*Dont Look Back*, *The War Room*). "They're actually the hardest to do," he admits, "because you have to gather all the pieces for the film from the scenes you shoot. You're not going to rely on narration and you're not going to rely on interviews, so you are almost like part detective, part cameraman, and part storyteller."

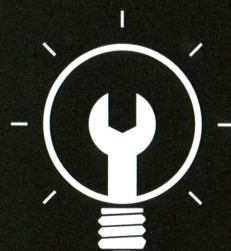
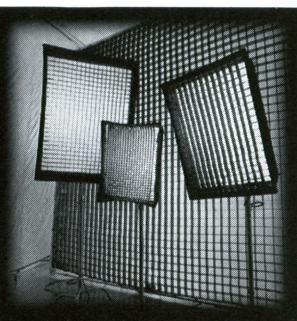
"There is a constant hustling to be in the right place at the right time, especially because the classic cinéma vérité style is [shot by] one cameraman. One day I stumbled across Ewan McGregor getting his hair cut, and George was directing it and talking about what the character was going to be like and what the haircut meant. I had to try to be at the right place at the right time to capture the conversation; then, when I had a second, I allowed the camera to follow the visual movements and stay on things a little longer than I might otherwise have done. It's not like making a feature film, it's more like hunting! You constantly have to ensure that you have all the coverage from all the different angles. Fortunately, the haircut went on for about half an hour, and I knew it would only be two minutes in the final film, so I had time to shoot coverage."

There were times when Shenk had to hire a crew or a second cinematographer — such as when he sought to capture a scoring session with renowned composer John Williams. "We needed a second camera for that scene because it was in an enormous room and we could only be there for about an hour," Shenk explains. "We also put a little bug-eyed camera rig in front of Williams to capture him."

Shenk spent the first six months shooting alone, but once production neared he lobbied for a soundman. "If you have a really keen ear, you can tell that the first few scenes of the film were shot with a camera mike," he admits. "From then on, it was me and a sound guy 90 percent of the time."

At first, Shenk had to work hard to gain his subjects' trust, but he couldn't afford to become too chummy lest it interfere with the "vérité" approach.

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Shenk gets in the thick of things as actor Ray Park (back to camera) and stunt coordinator Nick Gillard rehearse a lightsaber duel.



"What's really nice about making a documentary is that you become part of a new family," he notes. "Still, there was always a dance between maintaining relationships and retaining a bit of distance to be able to cover a scene and allow the camera to be invisible. My

style was to be as friendly as I possibly could be, and I genuinely liked and really respected a lot of the people I was filming. When I was actually shooting, I tried to be as quiet as I could be. I'd slip into a room, make eye contact with people or say hello, and quickly get about the job

and do my business. The work they do is hard and it takes a lot of concentration, so it's kind of easy to get wrapped up in the shooting of it."

The documentary employs a lot of crosscutting to give viewers a sense of the project's scope and the large number of people involved. "Even though *Episode I* took a long time to make, there were a lot of things going on at once," he explains. "We crosscut to show that while the script was being read for the first time and production was about to start, they were still putting the finishing touches on the pods. Or while things were going on at ILM, there was a rough-cut review going on at Skywalker Ranch. We wanted it to move quickly, with this inevitable sense of 'It's gonna happen. There is a lot of work to be done, but it *has* to happen.' There's a shot in the film of a sign that [co-visual-effects supervisor] John Knoll put up that read, 'This film is going to come out in May 1999 no matter what!' No matter how much they had to do,

Pancake Lanterns (shown here with adjustable/removeable skirts)



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there was a railroad-track momentum to the project, and they had to stay onboard. We tried to impart all of that in the documentary."

A year and a half after Shenk wrapped the Lucasfilm project, Jim Ward, the company's vice president of marketing, called him with a proposal. "Jim said he wanted to create a documentary that would give an honest insight into the making of *Episode I* from both Lucasfilm's and ILM's perspectives," Shenk recalls. "He was frustrated with the typical interviews and commentaries on most DVDs that tend to gloss over the hard work and dedication it takes to make a major motion picture, and he wanted to create a documentary that went beyond a commercial 'making of' style."

"Mine is the story of a young kid who was given an incredible opportunity, and the stars aligned when I got Jim's call," he concludes. "For me, *The Beginning* was actually the end of a long road." ■

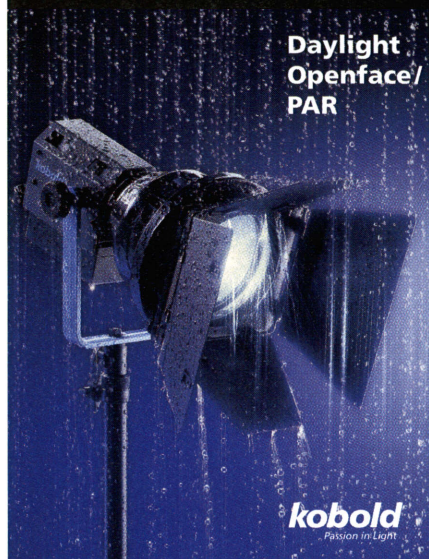


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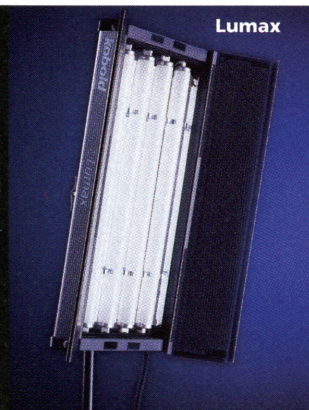
In our August 2001 special section on visual effects, our coverage of *Driven* included several photos of scenes that were attributed to Look! Effects. The photos actually depict sequences that were handled by Tigar Hare Studios, a high-end visual

effects and 3-D animation boutique company based in Sherman Oaks, California. The firm, which recently expanded its corporate offices into a new 5,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art digital facility, handled more than 50 effects shots for the film. AC regrets the error.

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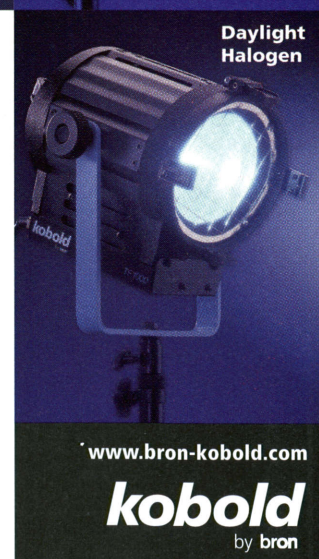
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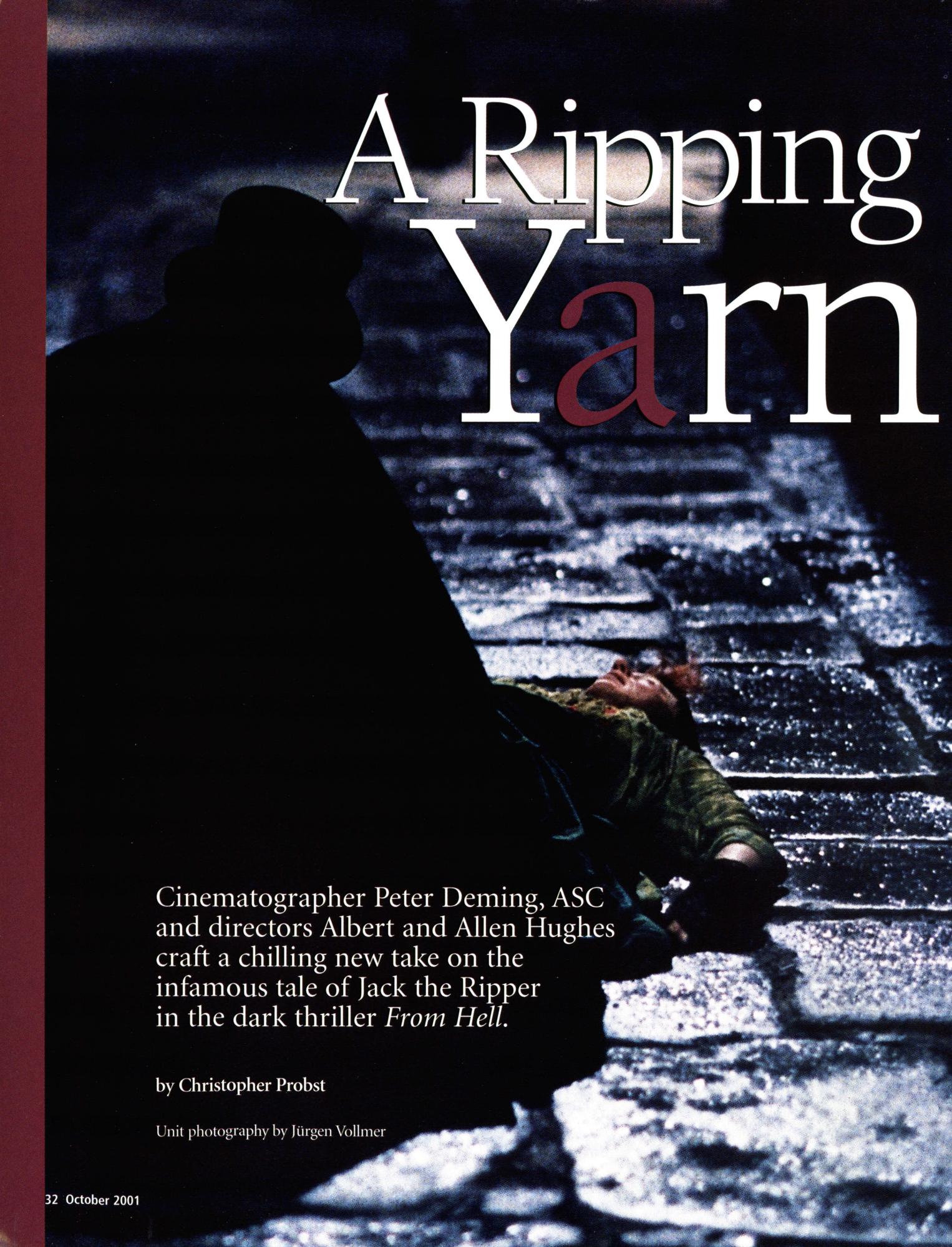
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A Ripping Yarn

Cinematographer Peter Deming, ASC and directors Albert and Allen Hughes craft a chilling new take on the infamous tale of Jack the Ripper in the dark thriller *From Hell*.

by Christopher Probst

Unit photography by Jürgen Vollmer

More than 100 years after he terrorized London with a series of grisly murders, Jack the Ripper remains one of history's most notorious and enigmatic serial killers. His five inconceivably gruesome crimes in the fall of 1888 — and his cavalier habit of committing them in wide-open areas — spawned an international media frenzy. The fact that the Ripper's exploits were never solved has added to the mystique of his legend.

Filmmakers Albert and Allen Hughes, whose last major feature was the urban epic *Dead Presidents* (see AC Sept. '95), say they had never considered making a movie about Jack the Ripper until they were offered *From Hell* in the mid-1990s. "The only exposure we'd had to Jack the Ripper was seeing the show *In Search of...* as kids," says Albert. "But the script had a lot of elements that we liked. Even though it's a period piece, it's also an urban story that deals with poverty, corruption and murder — themes that we like to deal with in films — except it doesn't have any guns."

While developing the project over the next several years, the brothers devoured countless hours of material on the Ripper, beginning with the motion picture's main inspiration: Alan Moore's popular graphic novel *From Hell*, which provided the springboard for the film's conspiracy-theory take on the mysterious murders. The duo also devoured other fiction and nonfiction accounts, documentaries and narrative films. During their research, one especially interesting fact began to emerge: "All of the previous accounts made of this story have been told from the eyes of the prim upper class," notes Albert. "Our film reveals it more from the perspective of the people who had to live in the squalor, in the neighborhood where this terror was inflicted. To us, this movie is a ghetto story. All



poor people have the same problems; these particular characters just happen to be white."

Working primarily from the graphic novel's take on the murders, the Hugheses spent several years ironing out the narrative with screenwriters Terry Hayes and Rafael Yglesias. "The first 45 pages of the original script, which was based on the comic, were really great, but the script had much more of a Hollywood ending," Albert explains. "We worked on getting rid of that ending and getting back to the comic book's take on the story. Alan Moore's comic originally appeared as a 10-part series, though, and there's no way you can directly translate that into a two-hour movie. We weren't trying to make a 'comic-book movie' that would be a direct lift from the graphic novel. However, there are a lot of cool moments in the film that are very close to Moore's book."

The brothers say they immediately knew that Peter Deming, ASC would be the ideal cinematographer

for their dark, atmospheric vision of the Ripper mythos. They had been extremely impressed with Deming's lighting in David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (see AC Mar. '97), and they had met the cameraman when that film was released. "*From Hell* is set in the Victorian era, so most of the sources are candles and lanterns," Deming says of his overall lighting scheme. "However, it was also a period when they were just starting to get electricity into upper-class homes, so there's a mixture of gaslights, fireplaces, candles and electric light. Allen and Albert were interested in a lot of shadows and darkness, so most of the sets and costumes are quite dark; in preparing for the film, I looked at a lot of Flemish paintings in which faces are lit, but everything else is really dark. It's not *totally* black; there are different levels of darkness in the background."

The production was scheduled to be shot entirely in Prague, the capital city of the Czech Republic, before Deming was brought on board. "That

Opposite page: Jack the Ripper completes his grisly evisceration of a local "working girl." This page: Inspector Abberline (Johnny Depp) and his partner, Sgt. Godly (Robbie Coltrane), survey the aftermath of another macabre murder. "There are two or three somewhat accepted theories behind the murders," states cinematographer Peter Deming, ASC. "*From Hell* uses the most sensational version of those, which involves the government, the freemasons and even the royal family. While the film is based upon real events, no one actually witnessed the murders, so we had a certain amount of leeway in depicting them on film."

A Ripping Yarn



Moody, atmospheric visuals abound as "Saucy Jack" spreads panic (and bodies) around Victorian-era London. "We took a lot of inspiration from David Lean's *Oliver Twist*," notes co-director Albert Hughes. "The textures of the walls in that movie are amazing. I loved the way the walls glistened with moisture, so we used a lot of that in *From Hell*." This misty murder scene was eerily illuminated with a pair of small Chimeras (fitted with cloth eggcrates to keep the soft light from spilling on the rest of the dark set) and some controlled edge lighting.

was mainly an economic decision," Deming notes. "It's very hard to find large sections of London that are still of that period, and Prague still has many cobblestone streets and older architecture intact. However, production designer Martin Childs felt that the exteriors of the buildings in Prague didn't really fit [late 19th-century London], so we built a Whitechapel set in a field just outside of the city, and we shot 98 percent of our exteriors there. The set was quite large — about three blocks by two blocks of facades with many little alleyways — and even though we had to build it from scratch, it cost a lot less to build in Prague than it would have elsewhere.

"However, Prague was great for many of the interiors it offered in and around the city," he adds. "The city has obviously been around a long time and was never bombed during the wars, so there are a lot of amazing, beautiful interiors."

Whenever they make a film, the Hughes brothers tend to divvy up the directorial duties. Albert handles many of the technical aspects related to camera movement and composi-

tion, while Allen focuses on working with the actors. They have also established a system of checks and balances that allows them to give feedback to each other. When preparing for a project, Albert says he and Allen "go through a list of movies and print frames we like for their composition, color, production design, the way an actor looks in the frame — basically some element that sticks out to us — and create several different reference books."

To prepare for *From Hell*, he adds, "we watched every Jack the Ripper movie out there. All of them were pretty corny, but each had some element that was cool. We wanted to take all of the best ideas from those movies and put them into our film. I tried to get Peter to watch all of them, but he was like, 'Okay, I watched *two* of these and they're horrible! Do I really need to see all of them?'"

"I then normally work with the cinematographer and a storyboard artist with an overhead projector," Albert continues. "I draw out my ideas on the overhead projector and then have the storyboard artist sketch it out and do a cleaner version later.

However, on this film I first worked with a storyboard artist in Prague, and then had Peter come in to advise us about what was realistic."

Deming recalls that "Albert was fairly specific about his ideas. The storyboarding process allowed us to get to know each other's taste, backed by a volume of reference stills. From that, Albert and I had a pretty good sense of what styles we liked. We also determined that we would try to use the whole frame and do some extreme framing for dramatic purposes."

Albert says he and his brother are longtime fans of the 2.35:1 widescreen ratio. "Many of our favorite movies are in widescreen, and we like the feel of it," he relates. "We like the cropped headroom and the ability to play with sides of the frame. Interestingly, on *From Hell* we were actually able to use the wider frame to make the compositions seem more claustrophobic. In the tight alleyways, you can *feel* that narrow space much more."

Having shot *Dead Presidents* in the Super 35 format, the duo planned to follow suit on *From Hell*. Deming, however, felt the project would be better served by anamorphic's larger negative area and direct contact printing, which doesn't require the optical blowup that Super 35 does. "The Hugheses saw the film in widescreen from the very beginning," Deming says. "I've worked with both anamorphic and Super 35, and I feel that the image quality in anamorphic is much better. The format is a bit limiting in terms of your lens choices, especially when you get into the faster lenses, and I think that took some getting used to for Albert, who's more accustomed to using flat lenses in Super 35."

"Anamorphic threw me off a little," Albert acknowledges. "In addition to getting used to the different lens sizes, there were other limitations. The lenses are heavier, which affected the feel of the Steadicam, and



Left: The body count rises as the police force scratches its head.

Bottom left: While some of the corpses were portrayed by "dead" actors, Millennium Effects also designed faux corpses to exacting (and forensically accurate) detail. The production obtained rare photos of the murder scenes as well as coroner reports revealing the precise location, size and depth of the incisions inflicted by the Ripper.

Below: Deming (at camera) lines up a shot of Depp during a rehearsal, as Allen (far right) and Albert (standing behind his brother) look on.



because they're slower we sometimes couldn't shoot high-speed with certain film stocks. I feel that Super 35 is much more filmmaker-friendly; even with all of the talk about the degradation of the film [from the optical step], I love it. If the general viewing audience can't tell the difference, and if for the most part I can't even tell the difference, then it's not a major difference. Cinematographers may not like to hear that, but it's true."

Once they had agreed to shoot in anamorphic, the filmmak-

ers developed a strategy for using camerawork to underscore the political and social forces that were at play during the Ripper's reign of terror. "Our original idea was that when we were in the upper-class areas, we'd have a more classic, sturdy frame," Albert details. "Then, when we were in the streets, we'd do more camera moves and handheld work and cut a bit more. But sticking to that plan was difficult, especially in the upper-class scenes — we'd start to want to do some hand-

held or a dolly move, and Peter would have to remind us about what we'd said!"

He adds that the upper-class scenes all had to be shot first because of a last-minute casting change: Nigel Hawthorne, who was to play the key role of Dr. Gull, became ill and was replaced by Ian Holm. "Normally on a project, you try to shoot something that's really cool in the first two weeks to get the studios excited about the film," Albert says. "But because we needed to accom-

A Ripping Yarn

Top: London locals drown their sorrows at the Ten Bells pub, but the drinks often cost the poverty-stricken indigents their fare for a bed to sleep in that night. According to Deming, the filmmakers' research revealed that "even during the day, these lower-class locales would be smoky from lanterns, candles and fireplaces. The lanterns put out some pretty noxious smoke, so a lot of soot would collect on the walls. Fortunately, the art department was very savvy to that; when possible, we used smoke in the backgrounds, but I tried not to backlight it. Instead, I'd side-light the smoke so you'd be able to see it without it taking over the shots." Bottom: The Ripper's footman, Netley (Jason Flemyng), antagonizes streetwalker Mary Kelly (Heather Graham).



modate Ian, we ended up shooting all of the stuffy upper-crust scenes in the first few weeks. When the studio saw the footage, they came back to us and said, 'We implore you to use your style! Move the camera more!' Finally the night shoot came, and they could see what we were doing. But I'm sure they were thinking, 'We didn't ask for a Merchant Ivory film!'"

Deming notes that the storyboards for the non-dialogue sequences in the film called for a lot of camera movement. "There were a lot of connecting-tissue scenes going from here to there, as well as the murders themselves, so we tried to keep the camera moving quite a bit," he says. "For most of the dialogue scenes, however, the movements are subtler — we wanted to

keep things moving, but we didn't want to be distracting. Whenever possible, you want to block the camera with the actors, and then get the performances in one take without cutting. That helps in avoiding that kind of cutty, head-shot-to-head-shot pace, which is usually less interesting [to watch]. We also wanted to give the editor a chance to intercut things, so we blocked the camera to suit the drama and took it from there."

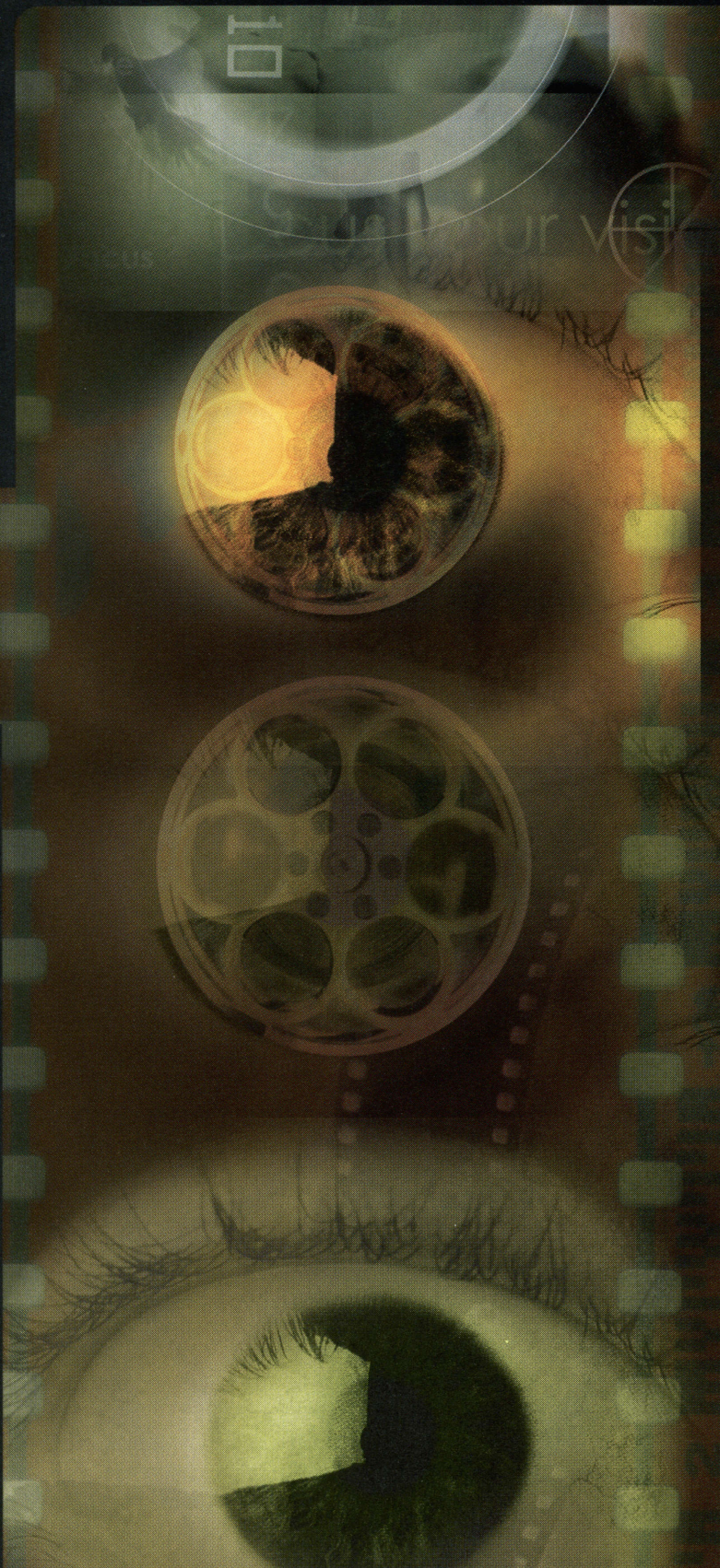
Careful blocking also helped to suggest the formality of the upper-crust scenes. "A lot of those scenes entail people sitting behind desks, talking in offices," Deming notes, "whereas the Whitechapel [scenes are] just the opposite. Those narrow streets were crowded, and people

were drunk and falling down, so we used a lot more background action and smoke, creating more movement and energy.

"The sets had a lot more depth as well," he continues. "There were a lot of tight corridors, and certainly some parts of the story called for the settings to feel very claustrophobic and disorienting. All of the locations where the murders took place were very faithfully recreated, but their proximity to one another was exaggerated a bit for our needs. Obviously, the murders happened over a few square miles, and we certainly couldn't build that. But in shooting those sets, I think we mixed things up enough so that you don't realize we're on the same set and everything is attached. We shot things from different entrances."

Selecting a color palette and lighting that would be appropriate for the horror and hysteria of the time was of paramount importance to the filmmakers. "We wanted to make a fairly dark, ominous film that was stylized but still had a sense of reality," says Albert. "Since we knew going in that we didn't want to show a lot of violence, we decided to use a lot of crimson red throughout the film. We have crimson everywhere — in the wardrobe, the carpets, the wallpaper, the wine, and even in the bloody meat that someone's eating. We don't really show anything that graphic, but our use of blood colors helps viewers feel like it's horrific. That almost kind of backfired on us in a small way, because all of the viewers in a test screening described the film as being gory, regardless of whether they loved it or hated it! But there's only one throat cut on camera. For the most part, [the violence is portrayed through] sound and impressions.

"The primary colors in the film are mostly earth tones like maroons, browns and tan," he adds. "Peter came up with a nighttime look that has a warm, chocolate feel."



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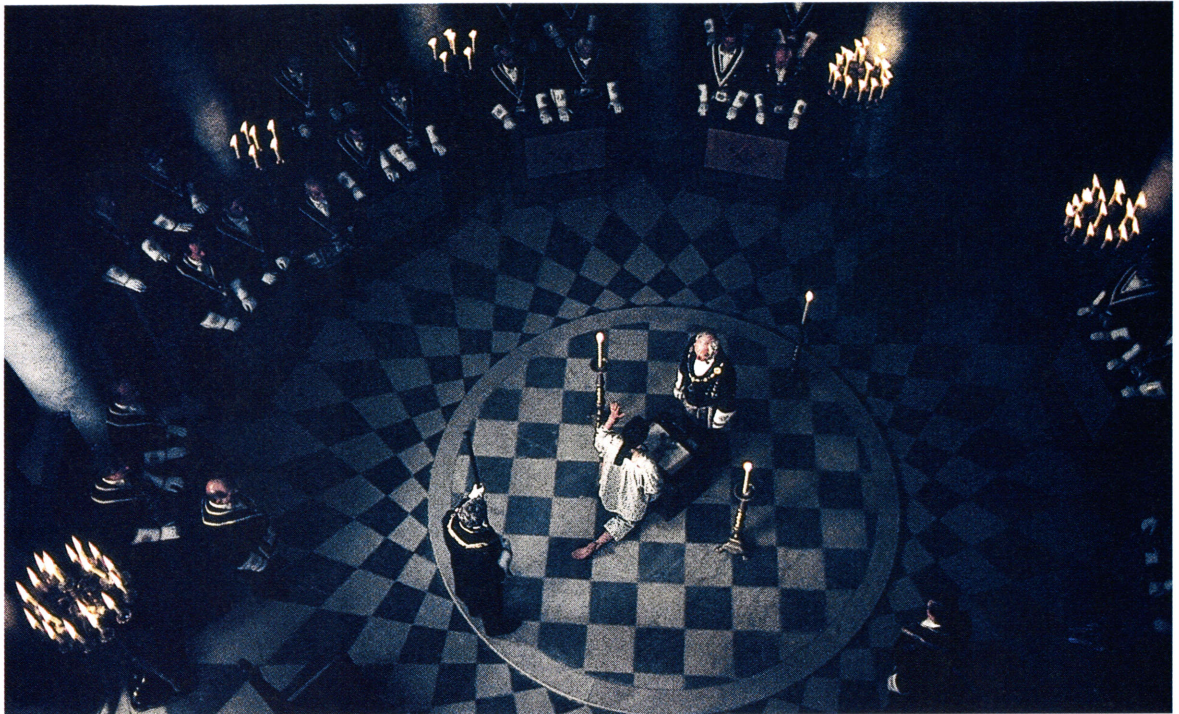
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A clandestine freemason ritual was shot in the Castle Kacina, located about an hour outside of Prague. "We shot in room that was a big rotunda, all lit by candlelight from these huge candelabras all over the place," Deming details. "For the wider shot we used a 12-foot balloon light as a soft top source. When we got into tighter shots (bottom photo) we could specialize things a little more, diminishing the intensity of the toplight and bringing in more side- and backlights."



Albert says that although he is closely involved in planning camera movement, "the lighting style is something that I leave much more to the cinematographer. When we get on set, I'm not as concerned about the lighting; I'm concentrating more on camera angles and moves. As the shoot on *From Hell* went on, though, I did begin to add my input on some of the shots, and Peter was totally open to suggestions."

"Overall, the film is pretty lush," says Deming. "The brothers

didn't want anything too bold. We definitely didn't want to lose any of the impact of the [crimson] elements, so aside from that the film is mostly rendered in brown, black and occasionally a bit of yellow. We tested some of the colors for the building exteriors, and also to see how the blood would read on the cobblestones, because we wanted to be able to separate the blood element from everything else while keeping [the overall tonal range] dark.

"We also looked at a lot of

photos from the period, and there were so many candles, lanterns and trains billowing out smoke that everything was kind of dirty and brown. So we touched upon that a little bit with lighting. We were always trying to place practical sources specifically within our shots, and we'd sometimes alter their placement after a scene was blocked."

In rendering several dark worlds on film, Deming has come to rely on Chinese lanterns and specific tonal levels to create a soft yet moody and atmospheric environment rich in shadows and depth. "Since *Lost Highway*, I've used a lot of paper lanterns. They work particularly well when you have a sort of practical, source-based lighting approach, and you can hide them easily. On *From Hell*, we had them all run through dimmers so we could change the color temperature. In most interiors, we'd use the lanterns on the actors and then have harder light in the backgrounds. The sets were often very small, and given the kind of blocking we were doing with the actors, I wanted to create the feeling of the light falling off quickly. We

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Production designer Martin Childs and his crew constructed a massive Whitechapel façade set in a field just outside of Prague. The sprawling period set was featured in an impressive shot that occurs early in the film. “We did an elaborate two-minute Steadicam shot that originally was intended to be the first shot in the movie,” Deming reveals. “It’s an edge-of-night cityscape of London. We then crane down to the side of a four-story building, peer into the windows, and then step off into an alleyway where we find Mary Kelly, whom we then follow across a street to another alley. We built a 25-foot Phoenix crane on top of a 20-foot platform so that we could have the Steadicam operator 45 feet up in the air and then bring him down along the outside of the building to street level.”



used a lot of black wrap to help keep the light from the Chinese lanterns off of the walls and other places it shouldn’t be. However, because the walls and wardrobe were dark, we didn’t have to do as much grip work as we would have with lighter tones. We had several different sizes of China balls [with diameters of] between one and two feet that the gaffer, Robby Baumgartner, rigged with two 500-watt Photoflood bulbs, which effectively made them 1K lights. When we got into bigger interior sets, we’d bounce larger tungsten lights off of 8-by-8s and 12-by-12s, and maybe use a China ball for fill.”

Deming utilized Panavision Platinum cameras and E- and C-series anamorphic lenses on the

show. “We had a full set of Es, with some duplicates for the B camera, as well as some C-series lenses for Steadicam work. We used black Fogal nets on the rear of all the lenses, and I’d occasionally use a light diffusion filter on close-ups. We didn’t get into using grads or anything, because most of the skies were being replaced [in post].”

All of the day exteriors and interiors were shot on Kodak Vision 250D 5246, and most of the rest of the film was shot with Vision 500T 5279. In a few instances, Deming used Vision 800T 5289, but “only when the shots were big enough to warrant the extra speed. I also wanted to experiment with the stock a bit.”

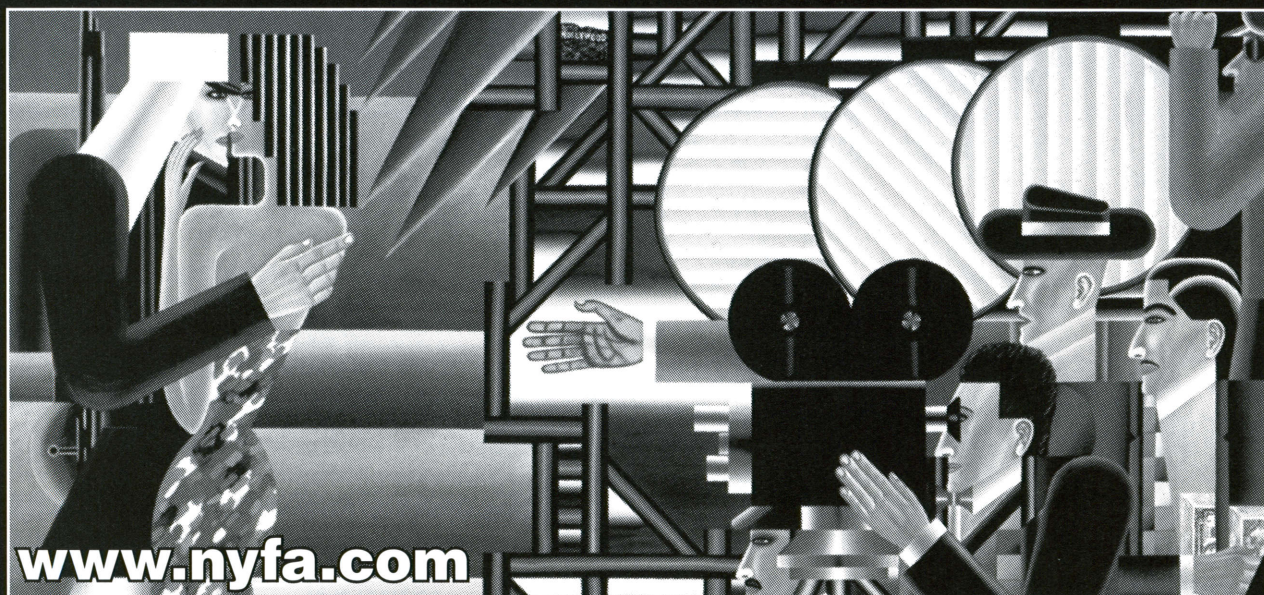
The filmmakers decided early

on to shoot in gray, overcast light as much as possible. “We made a commitment not to shoot anything in hard sunlight, and we hewed to that rule with the exception of two scenes shot on [EXR] 5293. A few times we really struggled with that plan, because we’d get outside and there wouldn’t be a cloud in the sky,” Deming recalls. “We had to fly 20-by-20s on Condors, and in some cases even scale down shots to try to achieve our strategy. However, since we were shooting in overcast light and had fairly low contrast, the Vision 250D stock, which is very lush and contrasty to begin with, really made those fairly flat scenes pop out. I was also overexposing it three-quarters to a stop so we could still get very inky blacks. We also used a #1 Chocolate filter on all of the exteriors to add to the earth-toned palette we were seeking.

“The day interiors, which were mostly scenes in the upper-class sections of town, featured some electric lighting, so there was a certain amount of differentiation between those scenes and the Whitechapel scenes; we didn’t use any smoke, and it was cleaner and more crisp. When we got inside the lower-class sections of town, even during the day, it would be smoky from lanterns, candles and fireplaces.”

While the exteriors of the Whitechapel scenes were shot almost entirely on the production’s “backlot” set, a majority of the interiors were shot either on stage or in practical locations. “There were a few shots where we linked some interiors with our exterior set, notably the Miller’s Rents [apartment] location, where we come into a courtyard and Inspector Abberline [played by Johnny Depp] goes into a room to look at a murder scene,” Deming notes. “We recreated part of that room on the exterior set in order to do enough connecting shots to be able to then cut to the interior stage work of that scene. For the stage

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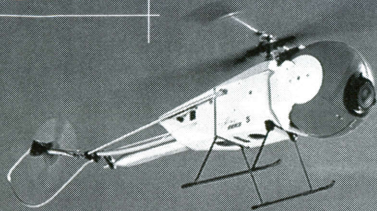
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work, the outside courtyard was recreated, and fortunately it was a fairly tight area that wasn't very brightly lit. So we just covered the outside area with a large Griffolyn about two stories up and then bounced [light] into it. Since it was so high up, we were never in a position where we'd see that the walls above were overly hot."

Whereas the show's daylight work presented a hodgepodge of practical locations, stage and exterior set work, the nighttime exterior sequences were shot almost exclusively in the Whitechapel set. "The night work was especially tricky because we were shooting in the summer and had very little actual nighttime," Deming reveals. "When we began shooting the night work, it would get dark at about 10:15 and then get light again at 4 a.m. When we finished nights a month and a half later, it was getting dark at about 9:30 and light at around 5:30 a.m. Every afternoon we'd plan out all of the shots we would do that night, lay track in as many places as we could — hopefully two or three different ones — and then break for a meal. When it finally got dark, we'd work straight through.

“I wanted to avoid using a big, overall light for the night scenes,” he adds. “There were a few instances where we were forced into using that approach, but the practical streetlights helped to break it up and provide additional motivation for the light. The streetlamps had bulbs that looked like gas mantles, which are like little, metal mesh socks that catch gas so that, when lit, they become incandescent and produce a fairly hot white light. We dimmed those down, and then we had ‘cheat lights’ — usually Par lights placed above the sets on buildings or on Condors — to create pools of light that people could walk through. All of those were wired through a dimmer so we could control them and dim them down for color. We

also warmed up the night exteriors a bit with 1/8 CTO and some Opal.

In addition to the streetlamps, the production rigged two 150' lifts, four 90' lifts, and some miscellaneous smaller lifts with lights and placed them around the perimeter of the set. "That way, if we turned around we could quickly switch on different units for cross- or backlight," Deming explains. "Most of the lifts were rigged with 9- and 12-light Maxi-Brutes, although we occasionally used a 20K if we really needed a single shadow. Depending on the distance, we'd diffuse the Maxis with either Opal or 250. If you get far enough away from a Maxi, in which the individual lighting units are bunched close together, those nine or 12 shadows do a pretty good job of becoming one, unless you're really studying that shadow. If we were in a situation where we had to be a lot closer, we'd use a single source like an Arri 12K tungsten unit."

The massive lighting effort provided the large Whitechapel set with detail and background depth, but Deming still had to contend with lighting the darkly clad actors. "Most of the time we were working with 8-by and 12-by muslins to create a sidelight bounce in the foreground, while generating harder light from the Condors and streetlamps in the backgrounds. Sometimes, if we were in a very tight situation, we brought in a Chimera for the actors. When the actors moved, we often followed them with China balls attached to boom poles; we had two sound poles rigged with either one or two 2-foot China balls that we'd use for traveling sidelight.

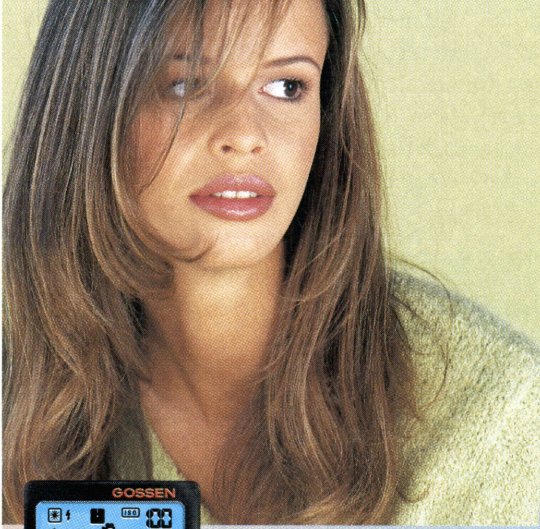
"One interesting dilemma was that we wanted to show Jack the Ripper without revealing his face," he adds. "His identity isn't revealed until the end of the film, so we had to create lighting situations where we could show him in silhouette."

Some of the film's more graphic imagery occurs in prophetic,

opium- and absinthe-induced visions experienced by Inspector Abberline. The Hugheses sought to render those visions in a tone distinctly different from the rest of the film. "We shot these hallucinatory dream sequences with [cross-processed] reversal, which lent the images a bit of a green hue," says Albert. "Green is the color of absinthe, so that hue became another

of the film's visual motifs."

"We talked about many different techniques for the dream sequences," Deming recalls. "We originally wanted to shoot with infrared film, but we found that it wasn't feasible. I talked about it with [fellow cinematographer] Bill Bennett, who has shot a lot of infrared footage for car commercials. He was very helpful, but it became



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A Ripping Yarn

In some of the film's few daylight scenes, the filmmakers elected to incorporate harder sunlight. "There were two scenes in the film where we used harder sunlight,"

Deming notes. "The first fit in with the sort of love story between Abberline and Mary. They were in part of an upper-class area of town, walking near a garden.

Those scenes were shot at a practical location, so when we scouted it, we talked about where the sun would be and which way they'd walk to determine the order of the shooting."



obvious during my conversation with him that we couldn't do it on this film, especially while shooting in Prague. You basically have to shoot infrared footage outside, and you can't really meter it with much accuracy — Bill just knows from experience how to use it. Also, there are only about two labs in the U.S. that can process infrared film — one in

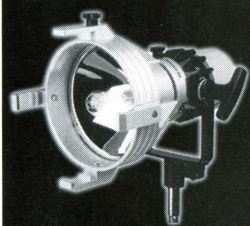
L.A. and one in New Jersey. The stock itself is so unstable that even shaking it around too much will cause fogging. So unfortunately, we had to abandon that idea.

"Other techniques, such as bleach-bypass, weren't extreme enough and depended too much on post techniques; we wanted to create a camera negative that really couldn't

be altered. Cross-processing reversal film was the most extreme technique we could find that also ensured that the images would remain the way we'd captured them."

For the cross-processed material, Deming used Kodak's 100 ASA color-reversal 5285 stock, which he rated at 50 ASA. "Because you're cross-processing the film, you're actually only using half of the film's intended lab processing, so your ASA is effectively only about 50," he points out. "We would often also push the stock a stop to bring us back up to 100 ASA. The latitude is almost nonexistent on the film, so 3:1 or 4:1 ratios are radical. As a result, we really had to watch out, or things could disappear rapidly, especially on our dark-toned sets.

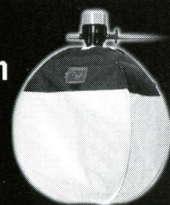
"As we began getting used to shooting reversal, however, Allen and Albert started coming up with bigger shots to do with it!" he says with a laugh. "Most of the sequences we



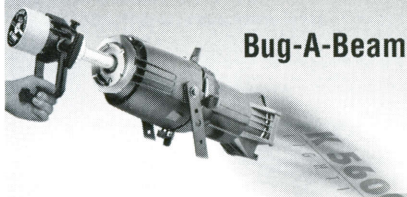
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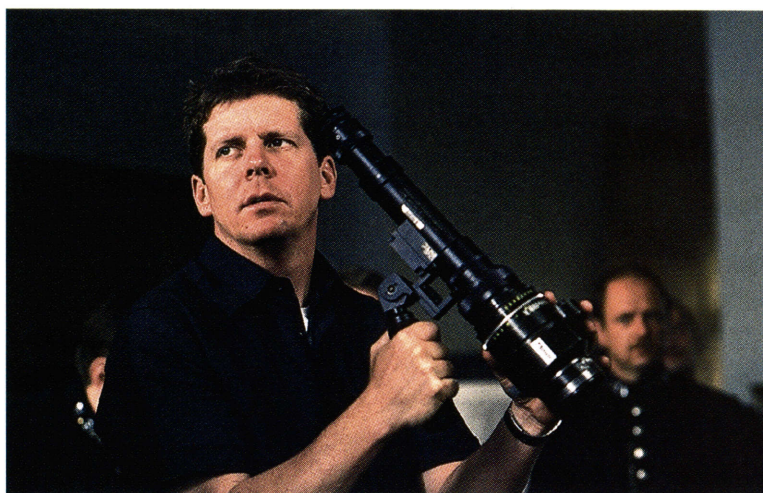


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originally designed for the cross-processing was the dream stuff with tight close-ups, but then we started to think about doing larger shots outside at night. It's a daylight stock, though, so we quickly got into using big HMIs. We tested shooting with tungsten lights and daylight units. With the tungsten units, the stock didn't hold up, so we had to stick with daylight sources. We made up daylight-balanced lanterns and put HMIs in the streetlights. All of that required a certain amount of lead time to prepare."

Of course, when one thinks of Jack the Ripper's dirty deeds in the dark streets of London, images of billowing fog and top hats instantly spring to mind. While doing their research, however, the Hughes brothers learned that this archetypal notion is mainly the result of dramatic exaggeration. "The truth is that during Jack the Ripper's three-month reign of terror, there was no



fog," Albert reveals. "Everyone has the perception that there was fog, but according to the almanac there were only fine mists. We therefore decided to use only fine mists instead of fog. Although we used smoke in certain scenes, it was never meant to be fog."

The Hugheses, who made their directing debut with the graphic and grim *Menace II Society*

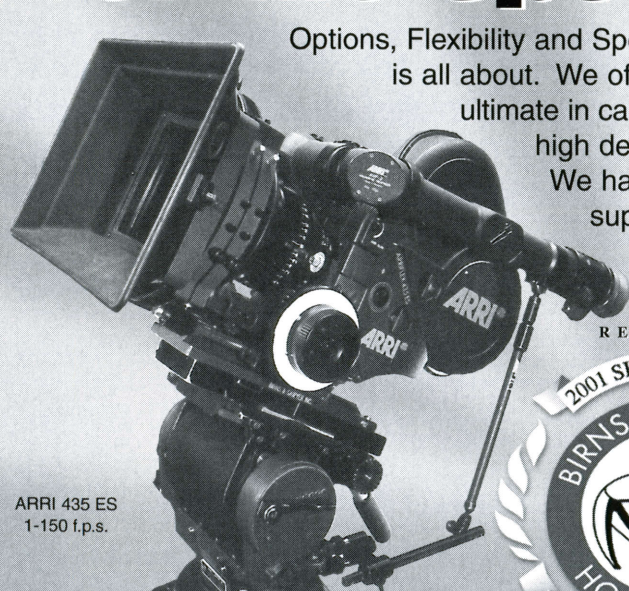
in 1993, say the impressionistic style of *From Hell* strongly appealed to them. "We wanted to make a film that would show that we don't use violence as a 'crutch,'" Albert notes. "The violence in this show isn't direct or in your face. *From Hell* isn't really something I think people expect from us, yet at the same time it appeals to our sensibilities." ■

Deming notes that the Hughes brothers didn't set out to make a "comic book movie," although he admits that "we were kind of envious of the graphic novel, because that format allows all the freedom in the world to cheat perspective in the drawings and exaggerate the degree of light and shadow — things that are impossible to do in the physical world. However, there were a number of elements [of the book] that Albert was enamored with and that made their way into the film."

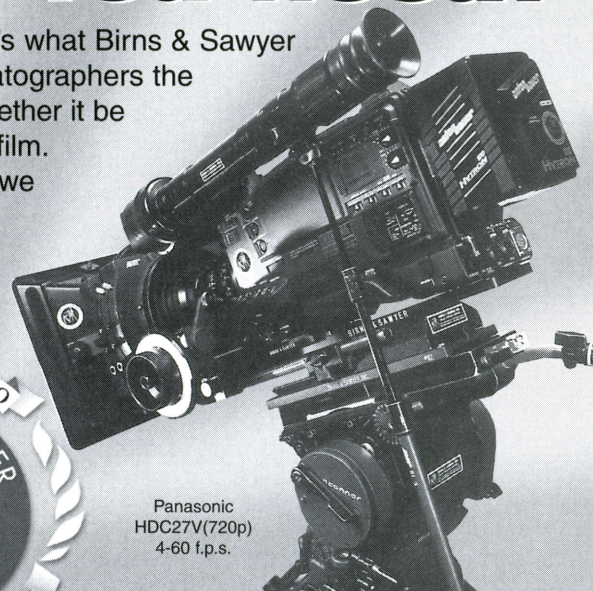
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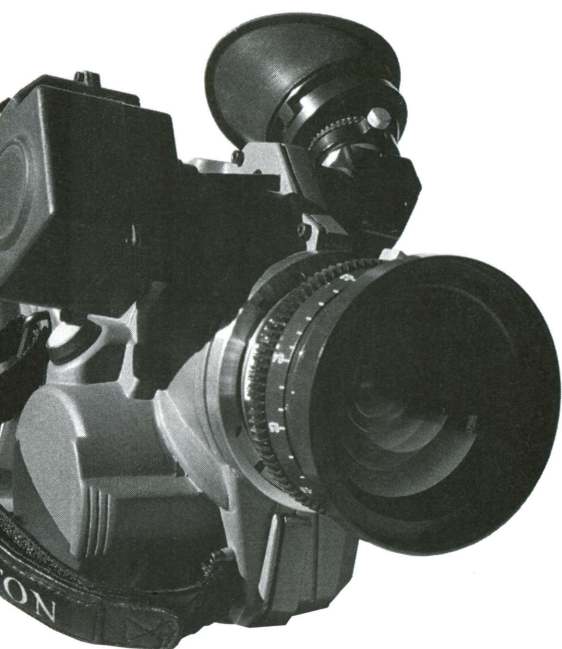
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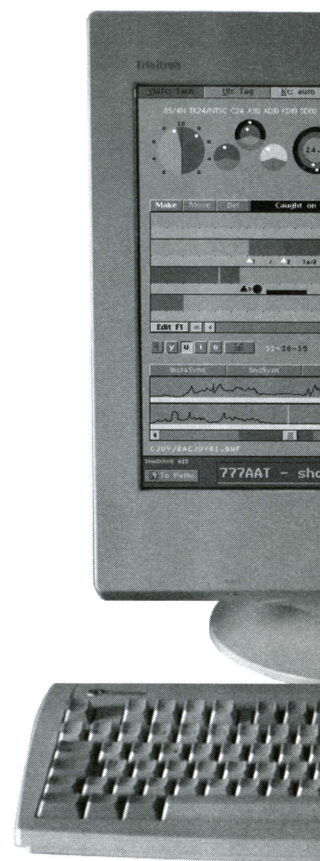
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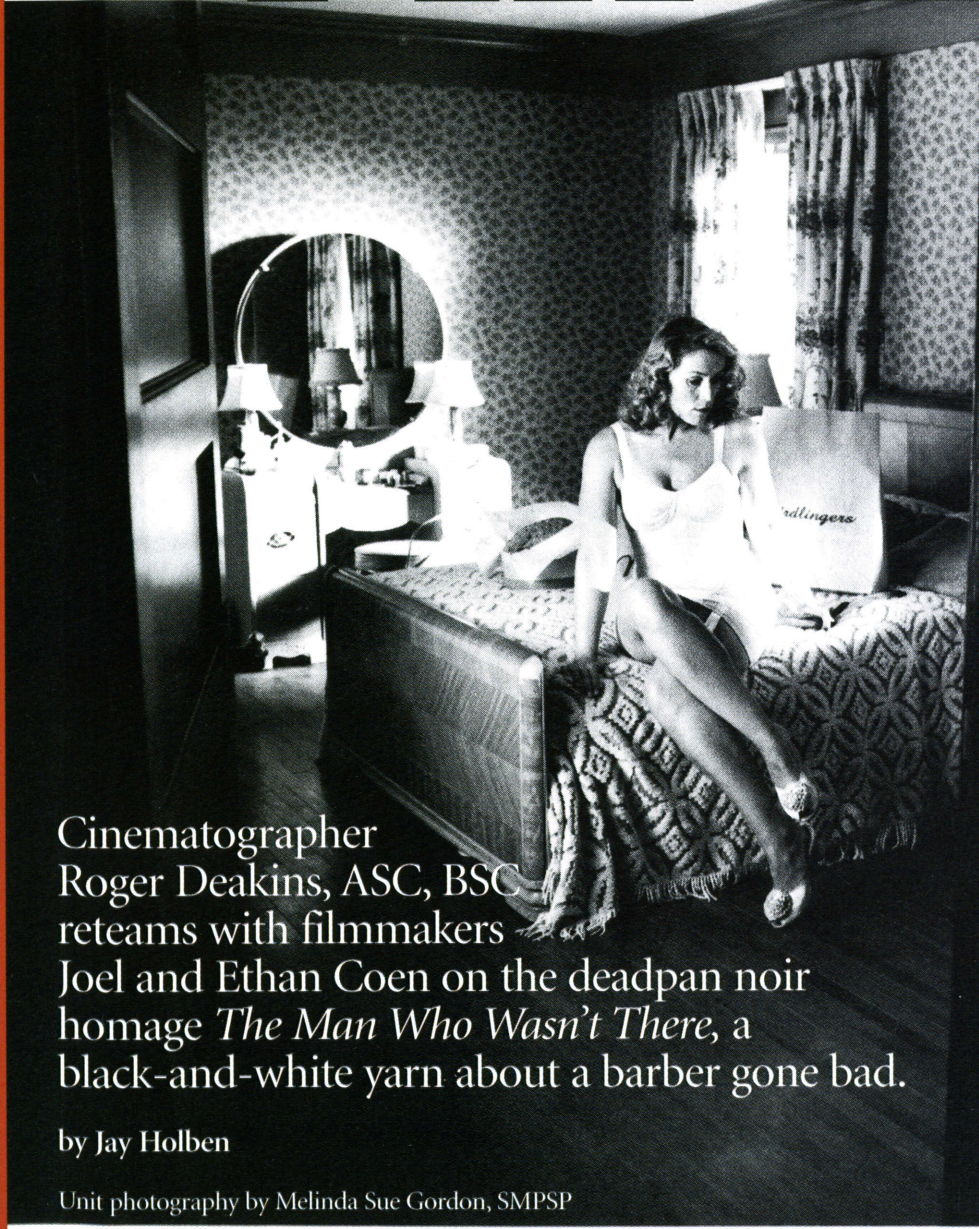
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The Root(s) of All Evil



Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC is as excited as ever about his ongoing collaboration with the sibling writing/directing/producing team of Joel and Ethan Coen. "They could shoot the telephone directory and I'd be on board with them," the cinematographer maintains. "They're serious filmmakers — serious filmmakers who happen to make comedies. There aren't many people like them. Anything they do, if they want me, I'm there."

A former still photographer and documentarian, Deakins has developed a stellar reputation for his versatile visual style. In addition to winning an ASC Award for *The Shawshank Redemption* (see AC June '95), he has earned three other ASC Award nominations, four Oscar nominations and two BAFTA nominations.

The Man Who Wasn't There marks Deakins' sixth consecutive partnership with the Coens, a collaboration that began with *Barton Fink* and continued through *The Hudsucker Proxy* (AC April '94), *Fargo* (AC March '96), *The Big Lebowski* and last year's *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (AC Oct. '00). The trio is currently teaming up on *To the White Sea*, which is slated for release

Cinematographer Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC reteams with filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen on the deadpan noir homage *The Man Who Wasn't There*, a black-and-white yarn about a barber gone bad.

by Jay Holben

Unit photography by Melinda Sue Gordon, SMPSP

next year. "It's a fantastic relationship for a cameraman," Deakins enthuses. "Every one of the films we've done together has been very different. The Coens always have a strong visual sense of what the film should look like, which is a great starting point from which to work."

Set during the summer of 1949, *The Man Who Wasn't There* presents one man's attempt to better his humdrum existence, and the chaotic downward spiral that ensues. Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton) works for his brother-in-law as one of two barbers in a small Northern California town. A quiet, contemplative man, Ed moves through life in a measured saunter. Although he has discovered that his wife Doris (Frances McDormand) is having an affair with her boss, Big Dave Nirdlinger (James Gandolfini), the well-to-do owner of a local department store, he doesn't seem to care. However, when Creighton Tolliver (Jon Polito), a nervous entrepreneur, rolls into town in search of capital for his "crazy idea" to start a dry-cleaning franchise, Crane sees his chance at the good life. To raise \$10,000 and invest in this new venture, Crane decides to anonymously blackmail Big Dave and threaten to expose his affair with Doris. As fate would have it, Crane's plan goes awry and sends his life, and the fortunes of those around him, into an irreversible slide.

Hewing to their policy of creating a unique look for each of their films, the Coens presented Deakins with the opportunity to render *The Man Who Wasn't There* in black-and-white — a first for the cinematographer. Discussing the origin of the film's look, Joel Coen offers, "For a lot of intangible reasons that aren't easy to explain, it seemed as if black-and-white was appropriate for this story. It's a period movie, and black-and-white helps with the feeling for the period. Black-and-white is evocative for a story like this [in ways] that color photography isn't."



Deakins recalls, "Joel and Ethan came to me and said, 'We have a black-and-white movie we'd like you to do. I love black-and-white; I was a still photographer for a little while and always shot in black-and-white. It focuses you on the content and the story, and it really concentrates your attention on what's in the frame. All too often, color can be a distraction — it's easier to make color look good, but harder to make color service the story. Black-and-white imagery is much more about the balance between the light and shade in the frame, and I think it can help convey story points a lot better with fewer distractions."

"Lighting is not only about lighting; it's also about *not* lighting, and cutting light off of objects as much as shining light on them," he continues. "Those kinds of considerations are as important in color photography as they are in black-and-white, but the sheer beauty of a well-composed and well-lit black-and-white frame is hard to beat, because it's difficult to produce that type of focus and simplicity when you're shooting in color. It's vitally important to be able to separate shapes and surfaces through the use of light and shade, and to focus the audience's attention on what you

want them to see. Color is seductive, but it's harder to get past the surface gloss to create a truly simple and relevant image. I almost wish *every* film were in black-and-white."

Whereas the U.S. version of *The Man Who Wasn't There* will be released in black-and-white, USA Films is contractually bound to release a color version on video in certain overseas markets. That agreement forced Deakins to generate a negative that could work in both versions. As a result, he wound up shooting on color stock. "That wasn't such a bad thing, though, because I had been testing Kodak's Plus-X [5231, 64 ISO tungsten] and Double-X [5222, 200 ISO tungsten] stocks, and I wasn't very happy with the results," Deakins remarks. "I began testing color stock printed on black-and-white side by side with straight black-and-white, and it was kind of a tossup. The monochrome stocks haven't really changed much for many years. They don't have the same [refined] anti-halation backing that color negative does, so you tend to get fringing and flares. They're also fairly grainy compared to the color stocks."

Another advantage to shooting color negative was that it offered an extended range of film-speed options to Deakins, who states that

Opposite page: Doris Crane (Frances McDormand) exudes the allure of a "dangerous lady" in this stylishly photographed bedroom interior. **This page:** Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton) tried to find a few hairs to trim after bald-domed entrepreneur Creighton Tolliver (Jon Polito) whips off his toupee.

The Root(s) of All Evil



Above: Musical "prodigy" Birdy Abundas (Scarlett Johansson) impresses Ed while tickling the ivories in the showroom of Nirdlinger's Department Store. To create some atmosphere in the white-walled room, cinematographer Roger Deakins "arranged the pianos with all of their covers open and silhouetted them against the back wall, which I kept as much light off of as possible. Then we set one incredibly bright practical on the piano next to Birdy, while keeping everything else in the room dark. The practical is really bright, but it works because it draws your attention straight to her." Right: Big Dave Nirdlinger (James Gandolfini) frets that his affair with Doris will lead to his financial ruin.

his eye is "tuned" to a T2.5 at about 500 ISO. "Eventually, Beverly Wood at Deluxe suggested that we try printing on 5269, a high-contrast, black-and-white title stock. It looked too contrasty at first, but she played around with the gamma in developing and managed to reduce it to something that looked absolutely fantastic."

Deakins eventually selected Eastman Kodak Vision 320T 5277, rated normally, as his main stock, and all dailies were printed on 5269. However, it was still undetermined how the production would achieve a release print, and testing toward that end continued long into postproduction. "I shot on 5277 because it's a

fairly fine-grain stock and it's also a bit flatter," Deakins attests. "I did a lot of test-printing onto the 69 because I had the idea in the back of my mind that we could possibly release on that. It was the best-looking solution we'd found in preproduction, so I shot the film to look good on that stock and decided to figure out later how we would reproduce that look on another stock, if necessary. I went for the lower-contrast negative, knowing that the contrast was going to get built back in on the 69 and that I'd be able to get a wide range of mid-tones at the same time."

As the production moved further into principal photography, a suitable release-print solution still

had not been found. "We tried the black-and-white release-print stock, but we were having problems getting the soundtracks to print right," Deakins recalls. "We did endless tests and they all looked awful, so I suggested we simply release on 69."

Deakins' unorthodox recommendation was met with surprise and doubt, but after a great deal of trepidation and even more testing, Wood found a way to utilize the 69 as a release-print stock for the majority of the initial theatrical release.

In a strategy analogous to composing a film for multiple aspect ratios, Deakins and production designer Dennis Gassner had to create a palette for the show that would both satisfy the pure tonal demands of black-and-white imagery and maintain a workable range for the color video release. "We had to keep the [palette] acceptable for the color version," Deakins confirms. "I made sure we were balanced in terms of color temperature, and Dennis designed everything in the tones we wanted without resorting to bright colors that would distract viewers in the color version. We mainly worked in browns and grays — tones that represented the time period and would reproduce equally well in either version."

"The color transfer looks quite good," he adds. "It has plenty of desaturation, of course, and more of a sepia look than 'Technicolor,' which is easy to do at the telecine stage."

Along with their affection for quirky subject matter, the Coens are known for their meticulous planning. Every shot in the film is storyboarded in intricate detail early on in preproduction. "They're very organized," Deakins asserts, "and I think that enables you to do your best work. I like the balance between being able to think about a script and scene beforehand, and then having the spontaneity to be able to change my plans if I get a particular idea during the shoot. Some people do



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The Root(s) of All Evil

Deakins (at camera) and first assistant Andy Harris take a close gander at Frances McDormand's gams as they set up a shot.



storyboards and say, 'We *have* to do it like this,' and that's death. You might as well be painting by numbers. There are always surprises on the set, and you have to roll with those moments. The Coens are a lot more fluid than others in [their approach] to storyboards, but things generally end up pretty close to their original visualizations."

The cinematographer notes that careful preparation is especially important to him because he operates the camera himself. "If you go in without a plan of attack and something surprises you, you can really get into trouble. I hate to get into a location where I feel I'm unprepared, especially because I operate the camera. I don't want the lighting to get in the way of operating. I want to be able to say, 'Okay, I'm lit,' so I can then concentrate on the framing and on what the actor is doing."

Deakins has served as his own camera operator on all of his features and states emphatically that he's "not interested in doing it any other way. I get too bored. When I meet a direc-

tor, I'm always up front and say that there's no point considering using me if that's an issue. It's the way I've always worked."

To satisfy union requirements, Deakins always has an operator on staff. The operator is typically someone who has recently qualified with the local, and the relationship often takes the form of an apprenticeship before the operator goes off to pursue his or her own career.

One of Deakins' favorite operating tools is a remote head (often a PowerPod or Hot Head) rigged at the end of an Aerocrane atop an Elemack Spider Dolly with a specially reinforced center column. This portable and versatile jib arm, designed by Kees Van Oostrum, ASC, offers variable length configurations, up to 12'. "Production always tries to limit our days with the Aerocrane because of the cost and because they think it will slow down the shoot. I counter by telling them that I will be using it every day — and we do. In the end, they invariably see it as a great time-saver, and it also gives the

director and me great freedom of movement. If we want to go over a table or something, it's really easy to do it with the arm.

"In the old days, you had to go through a whole rigmarole to put the camera over something. It required a [camera offset], and then you had to lean out over the end of the dolly to operate, which meant that you'd get in the way of the light! The actor would have to laugh, because there would be a cameraman hanging over this arm, on a dolly that was about to topple over, and the whole rig would be right in his face. Now, we do it on a little jib arm with a remote head, and I'm sitting 20 feet away, which is far enough that I'm not distracting the actors. The frustration is that when you're doing the shot, you're not actually looking through the viewfinder. No matter how good the monitor is, it's not the same as [looking through the camera]. When I'm setting the shot, I'll actually walk along with the camera and arm so I can see the scene through the lens while Andy Harris, my first assistant,

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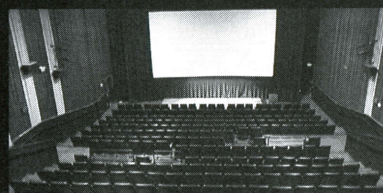
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The Root(s) of All Evil

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"Working as my own operator does place more reliance on my crew, especially on Andy, with whom I've worked for about seven years, and my dolly grip Bruce Hamme, who's been with me ever since *Barton Fink*. I tend to move the camera a lot. On some films you may only get a blocking rehearsal, and once you've prepared to shoot the first angle, the actor wants to come in and do the scene without a camera rehearsal. I have no particular problem with doing things that way, but it does put a lot of weight on the assistant and dolly grip, who need to be able to move in sync with the actor — an actor who by now is in full flow and whose movements only loosely relate to the initial blocking rehearsal. Bruce then basically becomes my operator. He instinctually puts the camera where I want it; he adjusts the camera position to suit my compositional style and what's happening in the scene. We've got it down to a science."

Deakins believes composition is the most important part of a cinematographer's job. "It's much more important than lighting. The balance of the frame — the way an actor is relating to the space in the frame — is the most important factor in helping the audience feel what the character is thinking. It's difficult to discuss composition and why I compose one scene one way and another in a totally different way — it's like someone asking why you light a particular way. You just do it. You read the script, you see the set, you see the actors do the piece, and you say, 'I think the scene would really work if we do this.'"

"I think it would be sad if you could define that process," he adds. "The fact that you can't define it is what makes it imagination, or what makes it stimulating and fun."

Deakins has favored Arriflex cameras and lenses for many years, and his main package is a 535 and



Ed finds it tough to sweep up the mess he's created by blackmailing Big Dave.

Cooke primes. "I like to light with a lot of practicals, so lens flare is an important consideration, and the Cookes are very clean and incredibly sharp," he explains. "I don't tend to use filtration all that much for the same reason: if you have a hot practical in the scene, filters can flare very easily and blow out the image. Working with clean lenses gives me more freedom. I don't have to worry about panning through a hot light and being hit with horrible flares." To lamp his practicals, Deakins often uses 200-watt halogen FEV bulbs instead of household lamps or PH globes. He notes that the FEVs help to create a crisp, hard shadow.

Deakins says that when lighting a film, he likes to "start with naturalism and then push it in a direction that suits the story." He initially thought of lighting *The Man Who Wasn't There* as a high-key noir film, but decided that the approach didn't suit the character-driven story. "Even so," he adds, "we used a good deal of hard light throughout the film. On other films, I often have to light large

spaces with soft light in order to give the actors freedom of movement, but with the Coens you always know where the shots are. I still approach each area by lighting the environment, but I can be much more precise about it."

The majority of *The Man Who Wasn't There* was shot at locations in California, including an abandoned furniture store in Glendale that was transformed into the ground floor and mezzanine office of the Nirdlingers department store. Several key sequences unfold within the walls of Nirdlingers, the first of which is a swanky employee party to which Doris drags Ed. "We had a low ceiling on the main floor of Nirdlingers, a challenge that was further complicated by the fact that we were moving into an office directly after the main party scene," Deakins recalls. "Because one wall of the office was a window that looked out onto the main floor, I had to put up some kind of rigging that we could easily pull away when we moved upstairs, while still keeping the bottom floor lit in order to see through the window."

To accomplish this, Deakins and gaffer Randy "Woody" Woodside lined both walls with 1K Redheads high up in the corners between the ceiling and the walls. After placing eight 1K units on each side of the room, they then enclosed them with triangular boxes of diffusion to create long softboxes on both walls. The fixtures were wired to dimmers to cool them off between each take so that the heat, which was trapped in by the diffusion, wouldn't damage the building.

During the party sequence, Ed steps away from the gathering and into the store's showroom, where he encounters a friend's pretty teenage daughter playing a piano. This is the first time we meet young Birdy Abundas (Scarlett Johansson), with whom Ed begins pursuing a rather bizarre and obsessive relationship. "I

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The Root(s) of All Evil

Joel Coen, Ethan Coen and Deakins block out a scene in the production's courtroom set.



really wanted this scene to be dark and about the shadows and the shapes in the room, but the set we were shooting in had white walls, and we couldn't do anything to them," Deakins says. "To create some atmosphere, I arranged the pianos with all of their covers open and silhouetted them against the back wall, which I kept as much light off of as possible.

Then we set one incredibly bright practical on the piano next to Birdy, while keeping everything else in the room dark. The practical is really bright, but it works because it draws your attention straight to her. We slowly dollied into her, but I made sure that we cut before we got too close so that I could bring the light around her face and create better

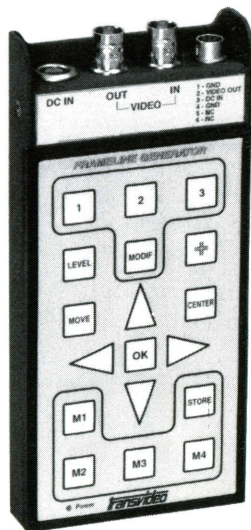
modeling for her close-up."

In another departure from his usual methods, Deakins turned more and more to direct sources and hard sources aimed through diffusion panels. "I used direct light in many places, although for actor's faces I still worked to maintain the soft, wraparound quality of light that I generally prefer when I'm shooting in color."

When Ed's wife suddenly becomes entangled in legal trouble as a result of his blackmail attempt, Ed seeks the help of Birdy's father, attorney Walter Abundas (Richard Jenkins). In one scene, the two men have a nighttime meeting on Walter's shadowy porch. To provide general illumination, Deakins set up an 18K HMI aimed through the large trees surrounding the house. For the closer work, the cinematographer augmented the hard light from the 18K with additional 1.2K HMI Pars

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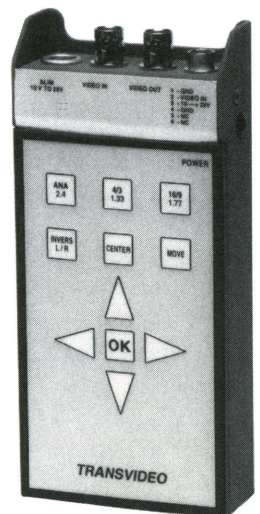
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bounced off of 4'x4' panels of muslin, which served to extend the hard sidelight from the 18K into a more modeled wrap on the actors' faces. The bounce light was then cut off of everything else in the frame to keep the shadows deep and hard.

A few of the production's sets were constructed on stage at Paramount Studios, including the hotel where Ed tells Tolliver that he'd like to invest in his dry-cleaning business. The production built a long hallway modeled to resemble the lobby of the real mid-Wilshire apartment building that served as the story's fleabag hotel. Just one corridor was built, but it was redressed to serve as three different locations in the film. At one point, the hallway plays two roles in a single shot. As Deakins explains, "We built the hallway because we wanted a particular shot that would start out looking down the length of the hallway from

outside the building, and then crane up to peer down the hallway on the second floor. We only built one hallway, though, so we basically craned up in the first shot and wiped through the brickwork of the exterior set wall. The hallway set was then redressed and we did the same crane-up shot again, starting from below floor level. Later, in postproduction, we married the two shots together with a simple soft dissolve. The same set was also redressed to become the hallway outside the psychic's room, so that set was ultimately used for *three* different shots."

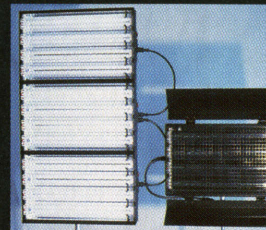
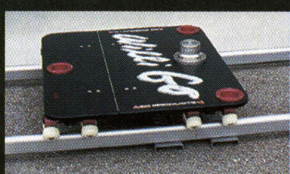
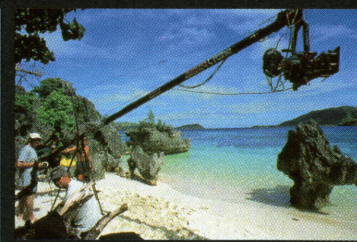
For the same sequence, Deakins asked the art department to create a cardboard silhouette of an exterior building. He placed this homemade edifice in front of a large bounce light behind the camera to create a reflection of the "building" in the window as the camera craned up. "I used the bounce as a white 'sky' on

one side of the window and the cutout on the other side to provide a reflection in the glass as we craned up. The reflection makes it feel real. I don't like shooting through glass and not feeling a reflection, so we just added the suggestion of something outside to give the image a bit more depth and texture.

"I think *The Man Who Wasn't There* works in the way that good poetry or a great novel works," Deakins concludes. "It can stir something in your imagination or twist something inside you in some way that you can't necessarily explain. There were things that were difficult to achieve at the time, but working with the Coens is always great fun. They're two sides of the same person, really, and they have a great relationship that allows them to bounce ideas off each other. I think that dynamic is what makes their films so interesting and worthwhile." ■

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Discovering Life in Death



Cinematographer
Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC
and producer/director
Irwin Winkler take a
poignant approach to
the emotional drama
Life as a House.

by Bob Fisher

Unit photography by M.W. Wallace

What would you do if you knew you were dying? How would you choose to spend your remaining days? Those are the overarching questions posed by *Life as a House*, which was conceived, directed and co-produced by Irwin Winkler and shot by Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC. The film features Kevin Kline as a quirky misfit who is searching for a purpose at the nadir of his life.

The project marks the first time Winkler and Zsigmond have collaborated, which is surprising in itself. Both of their careers stretch

back to the 1960s. Winkler has compiled 45 credits, mainly as a producer, and has four previous outings as a director. His films have earned 45 Academy Award nominations and 12 Oscars. Winkler won a Best Picture Oscar for producing *Rocky*, and earned other nominations for *Raging Bull*, *The Right Stuff* and *Goodfellas*. (These last three pictures were shot, respectively, by Michael Chapman, ASC, Caleb Deschanel, ASC and Michael Ballhaus, ASC, all of whom garnered Oscar nominations for their work; James Crabe, ASC created the iconic

imagery in *Rocky*.)

Zsigmond has compiled more than 60 credits, earning an Oscar for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and other nominations for *The Deer Hunter* and *The River*. He has also won an Emmy and an ASC Award for his rendering of the MOW *Stalin*. Zsigmond received the American Society of Cinematographers Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998 and the Camerimage Lifetime Achievement Award in 1997.

Winkler says that the idea for *Life as a House* had been percolating in his mind for four or five years before Mark Andrus built it into a compelling script with multi-dimensional characters. Kline is cast in the role of George, an irascible model builder for an architectural firm, whose life is rapidly sliding downhill. He has been estranged from his former wife, Robin (Kristin Scott Thomas), and their teenage son, Sam (Hayden Christensen), for years. Robin warns him that Sam is headed for big trouble.

Very early in the story, George loses his job because computers have obviated the need for his talent. We learn shortly thereafter that his days are numbered by an incurable form of cancer. George decides to spend his final days tearing down the dilapidated shack in which he lives (located in an upscale neighborhood overlooking the Pacific Coast), and building the dream house he had planned with Robin. He insists that Sam spend the summer with him and help with the project — though he doesn't tell him why.

"I loved the script," says Zsigmond. "The story deals with death, which is interesting. People are afraid to die. They don't want to talk about it, but I think it's important to deal with this issue. If a man has only three or four months left, what is he going to do? George decides to show his son how he should live."

There are multiple layers of subtext in the relationships between



Sam and the girl next door, Robin and her new husband, and also between George and his various neighbors. Mary Steenburgen and Scott Bakula are cast in substantial supporting roles.

Winkler says he didn't initially plan to direct *Life as a House*, but decided that he had invested too much of himself in the story to give the reins to anyone else. He recalls when and why he decided he wanted Zsigmond to shoot his film: "I had a picture in the back of my mind about a backlit scene on a cliff, and I had no idea how to do it. In my first conversation with Vilmos, I felt this great sense of confidence that he understood what I wanted. I could also see that he wasn't going to be reluctant to give me advice if he felt we could do something better. That's the way I try to deal with everyone, including the actors. I think that the director's main function is to take a group of really creative people and let them make the movie."

Zsigmond joined *Life as a House* some eight weeks before shooting, and was immediately immersed in preproduction planning and location scouting. "What's the point of bringing talented people onto a film if

you don't want their advice?" Winkler asks. Co-producer Rob Cowan adds, "I've always remembered reading an [October 1978] article in *American Cinematographer* about *The Deer Hunter*. [Director] Michael Cimino saw a mist coming up on the rocks very early one morning. It wasn't a planned shot, but he got Vilmos and they grabbed a camera and filmed Robert De Niro walking into the mist as he went off to shoot the deer. After reading that article, I thought Vilmos was someone I wanted to work with someday."

At an early meeting, Zsigmond suggested shooting in the anamorphic 2.35:1 format. It was a new concept for Winkler, who had never produced or directed an anamorphic film. Zsigmond screened *Deliverance* and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* for Winkler, and he described how the wide film format enabled him to compose intimate close-ups in two-shots while still showing the audience where the story was happening. "I told Irwin that we could have longer shots and fewer cuts because you can see how people react in the anamorphic frame," Zsigmond says. "I felt it would speed up the pace and give us more of a feeling of intimacy because

Opposite: The drama *Life as a House* chronicles the efforts of a terminally ill architect (Kevin Kline) to heal the broken relationships in his life and build his dream home before his time runs out. This page: After he is enlisted in George's project against his will, Sam (Hayden Christensen), George's troubled son, strikes up a relationship with the girl next door.

Discovering Life in Death



The glorified shack where George lives, which he razes to build his new house, was part of the production's main set, which was constructed on the Palos Verdes Peninsula north of Los Angeles. Above: Cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond goes over an upcoming shot with Christensen.

Right: Sam complains about his lack of privacy in the one-room shack.



you can see the characters together and read what's in their eyes. I like that close-ups can be two-shots. We also looked at *Scarecrow* and *Images*, two of my early, low-budget films. Most people didn't even realize that they were looking at anamorphic pictures [back then]. I thought a story about someone who is dying should look realistic."

Zsigmond also pointed out that the use of anamorphic lenses would facilitate selective, subjective camerawork that would pull viewers deep into intimate conversations and

make them feel as though they're actually eavesdropping on the fictional characters. "If the camera is subjective all or most of the time, it can get boring," he explains. "I suggested that we'd have to find the right balance of subjective and objective photography on the set while we were shooting."

Addressing his overall palette for the film, Zsigmond says, "I didn't want the film to have a harsh, saturated look. We practically eliminated reds, and there aren't a lot of other bright colors. It just looks more real-

istic to me."

Winkler says he always envisioned making the film in Los Angeles because the story explores attitudes that are unique to the culture. Production designer Dennis Washington and the art department built the cul-de-sac where George lives, as well as the shack and dream house. Except for George's house, every home on the street is a facade. "I don't know how we could have shot this any place else on our 52-day schedule," says Winkler. "We had total control of the streets because there was no one there but us. If we needed to use a crane at midnight, it wasn't an issue."

"Irwin and Rob [Cowan] believe in preparation," Zsigmond says, "and they planned to shoot on a tight schedule. We walked around the sets while they were being built. We had a great production designer in Dennis Washington. I had never worked with him before, but I appreciated his talent. If the sets don't work, the look of the movie won't work."

The main set for *Life as a House* was built on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, just north of Los Angeles at the former Marineland Aquarium. The setting offered a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean and, on clear days, Catalina Island. "The house was built in seven or eight phases," Zsigmond adds. "The art department sometimes needed a week to build the next part of the house. During that week we dealt with shooting the other parts of the story."

"George lives in the garage while the house is being built," he continues. "About a third of the movie happens on that set, and I didn't want it to feel too confined. I wanted the flexibility of lighting it differently in different scenes; otherwise, it would begin to look like a play. We discussed where to put the door, windows and other light sources. Most garages don't have windows, but Dennis was able to use windows in a realistic way."

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Discovering Life in Death



Above: Sam's ex-wife Robin (Kristin Scott Thomas) drops by to check on the progress of his project. Right: The crew prepares to shoot a scene at the architectural firm where George works.



The company also built two small sets in a warehouse about 200 yards from the cul-de-sac. Additional interiors were shot in private homes in Malibu and Long Beach, and at a hospital in Long Beach.

The cinematographer notes that Winkler used some storyboards early in the production, but eventually decided he didn't need them. "Irwin usually wanted the video monitor as close as possible to the camera so he could watch the screen and actors at the same time.

"I've worked with a lot of good directors, but Irwin is unique. If I had a suggestion for an actor, or if Kevin [Kline] wanted to ask me something, Irwin's ego never got in the way of us talking directly. He was open to any discussion. Irwin just wanted to make the best possible movie."

Winkler notes that George isn't likeable in the film's early scenes, but in order for the story to work on an emotional level, Kline has to make viewers admire and empathize with him through the sheer force of his

character. During prep, Zsigmond shot makeup tests to come up with a strategy that would help to convey George's physical and emotional arc. "The character has to visibly deteriorate as the movie progresses," he explains. "Part of it was accomplished with makeup that made him look increasingly pale and his eyes a bit more bloodshot. Kevin also lost a lot of weight while we were shooting. I was going to try using a special 'thinning' lens, but it wasn't necessary."

Although the story is set during a four-month stretch of spring and summer, the production was shot in the middle of the California winter. Sometimes it was cold enough to need space heaters on the sets.

"In our opening shot, we started on the ocean, came in over a lighthouse and moved over houses down the street," Zsigmond says. "We went through a window into the room where George was sleeping with his dog. We made a 270-degree move, showing the audience the interior, and followed Kevin with a Steadicam when he got up and walked out the door to the edge of the cliff overlooking the ocean."

The exterior portion of the shot was executed with a Technocrane, while the interior perspective was captured with a Steadicam operated by Chris Squires. A bluescreen was placed behind the room's window so that the two shots could be blended in postproduction.

"We never tried to sell the location or the scenery," Zsigmond says. "It's just there. In fact, many of the scenes were shot in the fog, where you can't see the background. It wasn't something we planned, we just had to make the schedule."

The film's narrative strands about failed relationships are revealed through a careful balance of dialogue and visual language. There are no flashbacks. "We used the wider anamorphic frame to tell an intimate story," Winkler says. "The camera

film friendly with us.



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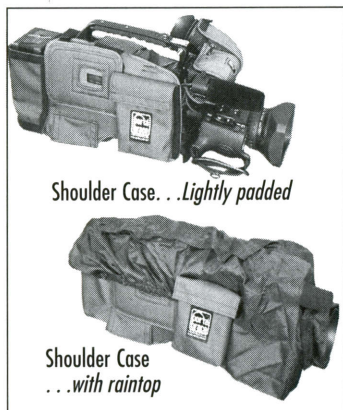
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Discovering Life in Death



Zsigmond lines up a shot on the primary set. Director Irwin Winkler notes, "In my first conversation with Vilmos, I felt this great sense of confidence that he understood what I wanted."

shows the audience the story that goes with the dialogue. They can see what people are talking about. There are scenes where we could drop the dialogue completely, and they'd still see the dynamics. When George is working with a chainsaw and Sam is yelling at him, it's too noisy to hear any of the dialogue, but you still know what's happening."

Zsigmond says he chose to use the older Panavision C-series anamorphic lenses because they come closer to the way the human eye sees things. "They have a softer look, so you don't have to use as much diffusion. That was important because we shot a lot of close-ups. Sometimes actors get tired at the end of the day. You have to protect them, as if every shot were a portrait. That's how you earn their trust."

The cinematographer mainly worked with two cameras, a Panaflex Millennium and a GII. Usually, one camera was on a wider master shot and one was isolated on a character or two-shot. He explains that the extra coverage was necessary because Winkler wanted to give the actors the freedom to improvise. Sometimes they'd do spontaneous things that couldn't be easily repeated on a second take. Zsigmond usually had a

Primo 11:1(48-550mm T4.5) anamorphic zoom on the A camera and perhaps a 30mm on the B camera. He also hid some very slow zooms within long dolly moves.

Zsigmond primarily used the 11:1 zoom as a variable-focus lens, which enabled quick changes from medium to wide-angle to extreme close-up shots. He occasionally used a third camera, particularly for montage scenes covering the house being built from different angles. At other times, the third camera was reserved for cutaways. For a couple of scenes in which the filmmakers wanted to suggest a slightly dreamy feeling, Zsigmond ramped the camera up to 28 frames per second.

The cinematographer decided to simplify camera loading by relying on only two emulsions; he utilized Kodak's Vision 500T 5279 for the film's interiors and night shots, and Vision 250D 5246 for everything else. "I chose faster films and didn't worry about grain because we were shooting in anamorphic, which gave us a larger image area," he notes.

CFI labs did front-end processing, in part because Zsigmond wanted to work with color timer Phil Hetos. Most days, Zsigmond and Winkler watched dailies projected on

a big screen. The cinematographer likens the experience to a composer listening to the playback of his music after it is recorded. "That's how they fine-tune their performances, and it was the same with us," he says. "We'd look at dailies and talk about the story. Irwin was open to everything."

Zsigmond was painting with a subtle brush. On very bright daylight exteriors, he usually had a polarizing filter on the lens to darken the sky about a stop. For close-ups on the actresses, he generally added a Soft/FX filter to render a slightly kinder look.

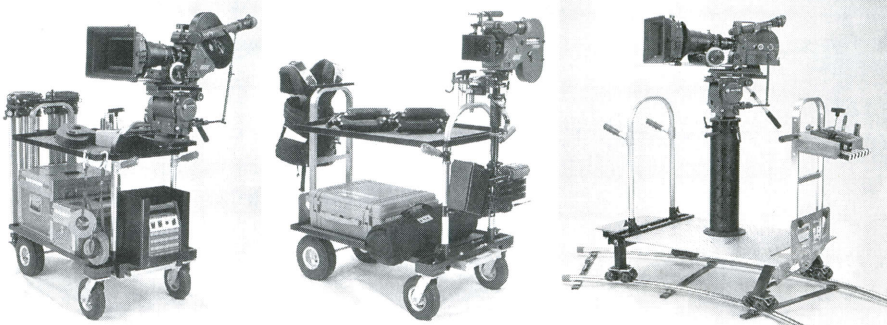
He also tried to stay true to his light sources. If a scene took place on an overcast day, Zsigmond made the light a bit softer. When day melded into evening, he added, "I used more blue than I ever had before in certain scenes because I felt it was right." On big exteriors, he lit with 12K and 18K HMIs through half CTO correction, usually mounted on a cherry picker. This setup provided light from a single source, covering large areas. Windows, streetlights and headlights motivated occasional fill.

Zsigmond often used camera movement to lend certain scenes a three-dimensional feel. Early in the film, the movement is more aggressive, but the camera slows down as George's illness progresses. Zsigmond generally saved Steadicam moves for times when it wasn't practical to work off a dolly track or a crane. One such situation was a long "walk-and-talk" shot with George, Robin and Sam moving together from the house to a car. He explains that the actors were walking toward the camera, which would have revealed the tracks.

For the sequence in which George learns of his rapidly deteriorating health, Winkler wanted to amplify the drama and avoid visual clichés. George is shown lying in a hospital bed, from the perspective of a camera hovering above him on a crane. The shot spins around and moves in on his face, and in those

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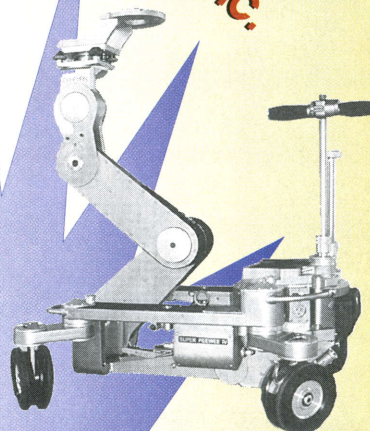


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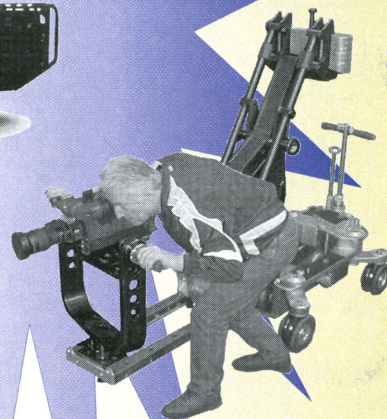
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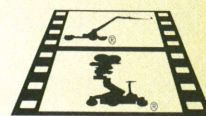
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Discovering Life in Death



Zsigmond captures one of George's contemplative moments after the character has laid the foundation of his new house. The cinematographer convinced Irwin Winkler to use the anamorphic format on the film, a first for the prolific producer/director.

seconds, Zsigmond made a subtle light change just as George wakes up and sees two doctors looking at him. There's no dialogue, but their expressions tell George that he's dying. The effect is completely impressionistic.

In other situations, Zsigmond

adopted a classical approach. "There is a scene when the house is almost built," he details. "On a CD player, we hear Robin and George's song playing, and it reminds them of the happy times they'd had when they were married. She invites the kids to dance, and then she invites George. We were shooting at sunset, with one camera used for a long dolly shot and a second one placed on a crane to put the audience in the scene. We shot the characters in silhouette, and it's one of the most beautiful moments in the story."

Throughout the film, Zsigmond strove to let pictures tell the story. One key scene early on sets the stage for an important story point near the end of the film. Sam is in a park, where he is fleeing from a police officer after being caught in an illegal act. He runs out of the park and ends up at the ocean near his father's house. During the shoot, the wind was blowing ocean spray onto the actor's face,



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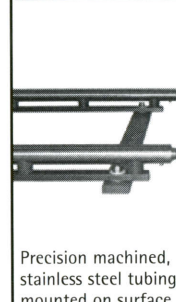
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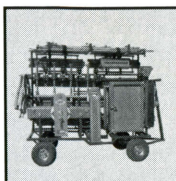


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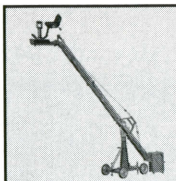
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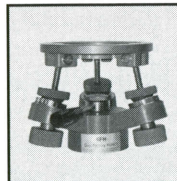
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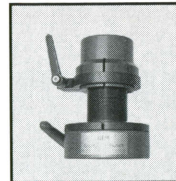
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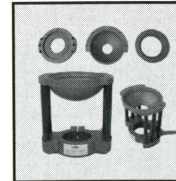
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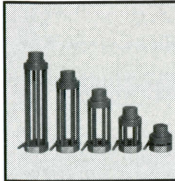
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and Zsigmond noticed that the effect looked like tears. He knew that there was no way to perfectly recreate the effect, so he instinctively moved in for a quick close-up. "It only happened that one time, and luckily we captured it," he says.

Another example of this pictorial approach to the material occurs near the end of the film, when Sam visits George in the hospital. He is angry that his father waited so long to tell him about his illness. Sam enters the room and sits down next to George's bed, and the camera makes a half-circle dolly move around them. The move is done in one shot with no cuts, and it extends the poignancy of the moment. Next, Sam takes his father to the window where he can see in the distance that the dream house has been finished and decorated with Christmas lights. This moment was also captured in a long dolly shot with no cuts.

Zsigmond points out that that the audience never actually sees George die; the moment is simply implied.

During the film's final scene, Sam visits a woman who was crippled in an accident caused by his grandfather. Camera operator Squires covered their conversation in one shot, beginning with a Steadicam on foot and then moving onto a Chapman crane that pulled up and away to provide a view of the city and sky, dissolving into a helicopter shot that shows the finished house with the sun setting behind it. Once again, the images amplify the characters' emotions, while also providing a sense of closure.

"At the end, George accomplishes what he wanted to do, and he can die at peace with himself, feeling that he did something with his life," Zsigmond concludes. "We didn't think of this as a sad story." ■



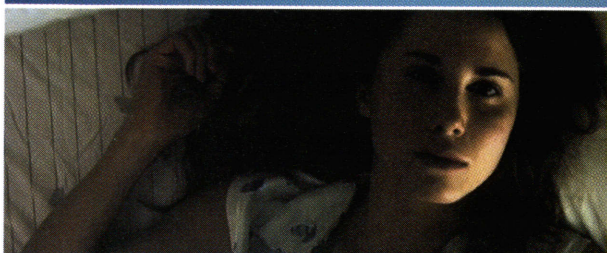
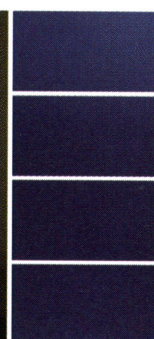
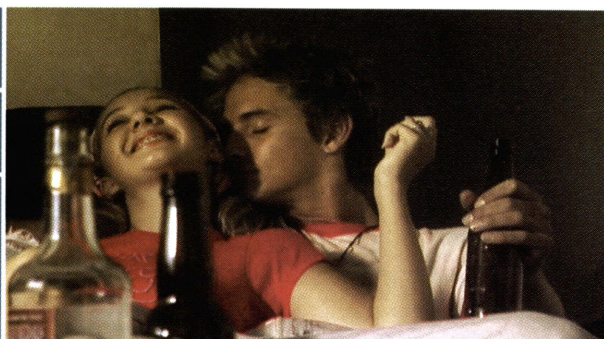
Zsigmond lines up a crane shot of the production's spectacular Pacific Coast location. He notes, however, that the narrative's emotional emphasis meant that "we never tried to sell the location or the scenery. It's just there."

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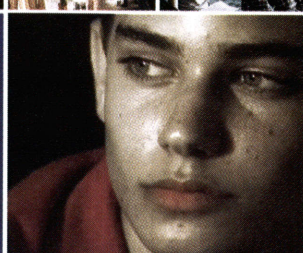
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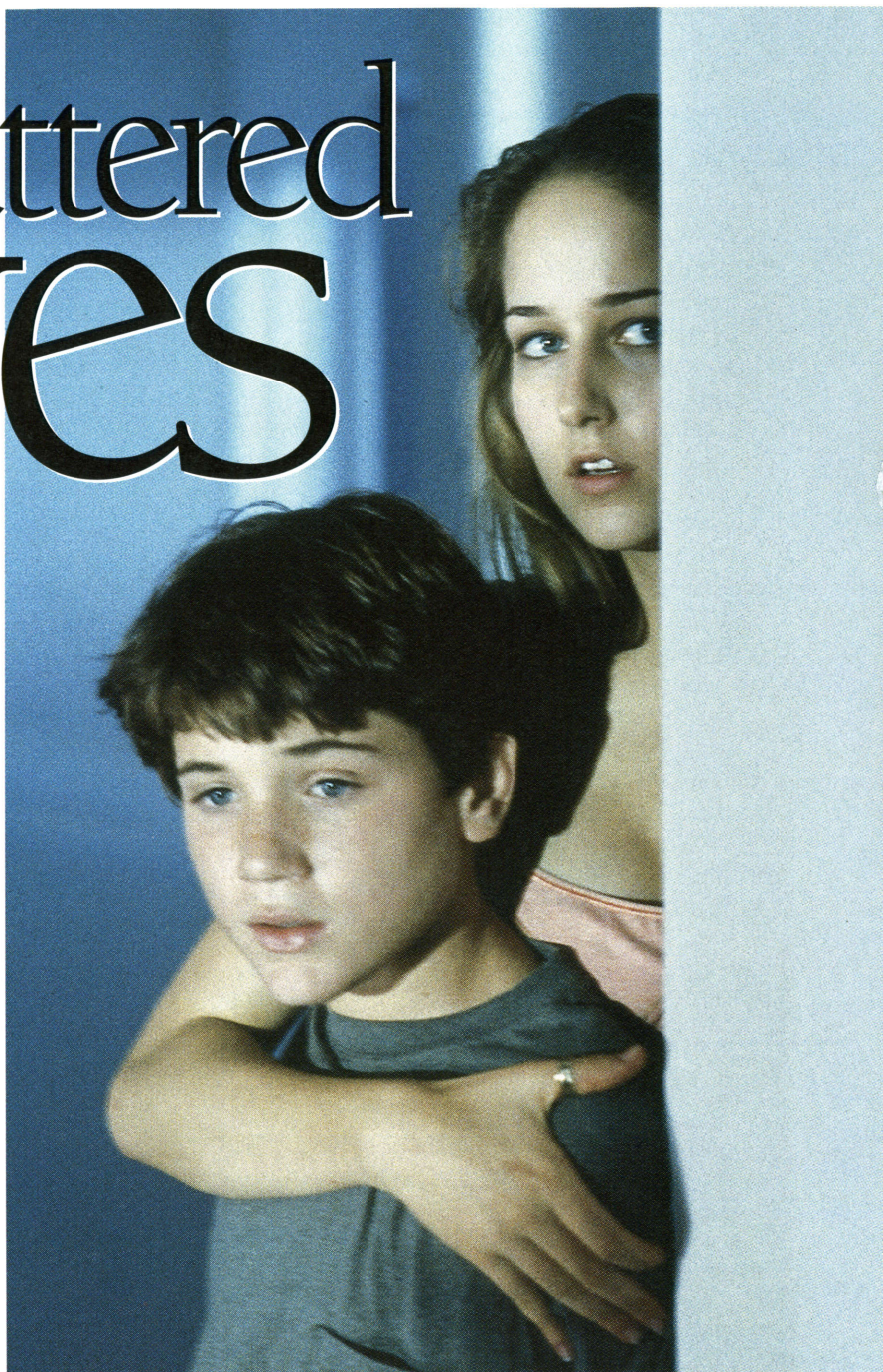
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L Shattered LIVES

A pair of orphaned siblings find themselves trapped in *The Glass House*, a thriller shot by Alar Kivilo, CSC and directed by Daniel Sackheim.

by Bob Fisher

Unit photography by
Linda R. Chen, SMPSP
and Peter Iovino



At the beginning of *The Glass House*, Grace and Dave Baker are killed in a car crash. Their teenage daughter Ruby (Leelee Sobieski) and her younger brother Rhett (Trevor Morgan) are suddenly alone in the world — but not for long. They are warmly embraced by their parents' best friends, Erin (Diane Lane) and Terry

(Stellan Skarsgård) Glass, who take the youngsters into their home.

At first, it seems like a genuine act of kindness. There are trendy new clothes for Ruby, and computer games and a TV set for Rhett. A lawyer (Bruce Dern) tells the children they are set for life — they're the beneficiaries of an estate worth \$4 million. But subtle clues set Ruby to

wondering whether the crash was really an accident. Are she and Rhett in mortal danger, or is she losing her grip on reality?

The Glass House is the first feature film from director Daniel Sackheim, whose résumé includes many episodes of the TV series *ER*, *Law & Order*, *NYPD Blue* and *The X-Files*. Seeking stylish visuals,



Mortal danger or mere paranoia? Orphaned siblings Ruby (Leelee Sobieski) and Rhett (Trevor Morgan) begin to believe that the family friends who have taken them in are responsible for their parents' deaths. This page: Brother and sister sneak around the sterile, confining home owned by the appropriately named couple, Erin and Terry Glass.

Sackheim tapped cinematographer Alar Kivilo, CSC, whose recent credits include *Frequency* and *A Simple Plan* (see AC Dec. '98), to collaborate with him on the project. "I thought the story had some really interesting characters whose personalities weren't black and white," Kivilo says. "One of my favorites is Erin, the role played by Diane Lane. She always wanted to be a mother, and now it happens under the most horrendous circumstances. That sort of ambiguity is interesting."

In his first conversation with Sackheim, Kivilo suggested that they avoid the well-worn path of using a desaturated look to visually underscore a chilling story. Instead, he thought the film should emphasize "punchier" colors that suited the lifestyle of the main characters. He also suggested that a widescreen format would lend itself to "quirky" and interesting compositions. Kivilo advocated the use of Super 35 2.35:1 over anamorphic because he wanted a wide choice of spherical lenses — the film's sets had a lot of glass surfaces, and faster lenses would let

him work with less light and reduced reflections.

Kivilo believes that cinematography should follow an arc as a story evolves, and the Super 35 frame offered him unique opportunities to heighten the tension as *The Glass House* progresses. He explains that the titular house, a 5,000-square-foot structure that overlooks the Pacific Ocean, initially looks like a magical castle to Ruby and Rhett, but as the narrative unfolds the house closes in on them, appearing more like a prison. As the story takes a darker turn, Kivilo occasionally places Ruby at one edge of the frame as she is discovering something about the Glass family on the other edge, or we see Ruby hiding at one edge while the couple is on the other. As the couple moves closer to Ruby's space, the visual tension increases. "I like to stretch the frame and put people right at the edges," Kivilo remarks.

The Glass House was filmed last summer at locations in and around Los Angeles. The cliffside home where most of the action takes place was made primarily of concrete and glass, but the practical location was

used solely for exteriors. The interior of the house was constructed with meticulous attention to detail on a soundstage at Sony Studios, where a majority of the film was shot.

During preproduction, Kivilo used a pencil-sized video camera with a 17.5mm lens set for a 2.35:1 aspect ratio to record images in a scale model of the house. This method allowed him to previsualize coverage, and proved to be useful for his discussions with art director Sarah Knowles and production designer John Gary Steele. In addition to makeup, hair and costume tests, Kivilo tested the colors that were used on the sets, mainly white and blue. "The first time Dan Sackheim and I toured the set, he asked if I was worried because it was so white," Kivilo recalls. "I told him that white always worries cinematographers, but that it was right [for this project]."

The filmmakers chose to depict several key events in the film expressionistically rather than graphically, and Kivilo relished the opportunity to use camerawork, lighting and color to enhance the power of

Shattered Lives



Top: Although she initially enjoys her new home, Ruby's sense of entrapment grows more and more claustrophobic. Though the practical location featured many windows to the outside world, much of the interior work was handled in meticulously recreated sets on a Sony soundstage, where a 50' high by 300' wide painted backdrop was used to simulate the exterior vista.

Bottom: A "family" dinner fails to cover up the tension that is building between the Glasses and Ruby.



suggestion. For example, instead of staging the accident that kills the Bakers in its entirety, the filmmakers show the audience glimpses of what happened. There's a slow-motion shot of the windshield wiper trying to remove rivulets of rain, and we see Grace Baker's slightly out-of-focus face contorted in an unheard scream. "The accident [is built from] expressionistic details," says Kivilo. "It was actually pouring when we shot the scene, but we chose not to use a rain deflector. We let the rain spatter on the lens and distort the image."

Kivilo worked with Panaflex Platinum and Gold cameras and a standard set of Primo primes, as well as the Primo 11:1 (24-275mm T2.8) and 4:1 (17.5-75mm T2.3) zooms. Sackheim liked to push in on the actors, and Kivilo often used the 4:1 to execute an "invisible" zoom. He used the 11:1 for exteriors. When both the A and B cameras were being used, they were generally on the same plane, usually with one providing coverage that was a bit wider or tighter. The cinematographer also carried an Aaton 35 for handheld

work and a car-chase sequence—the camera's low profile facilitated easier positioning inside the vehicles.

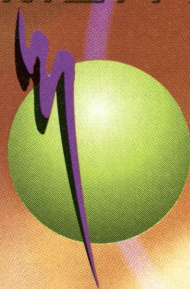
To capture some unique point-of-view shots from Ruby's perspective, Kivilo employed a Slant Focus lens. He notes, "The performances are realistic and the relationships are believable, but we gave the look a slight edge that we hope will draw people deeper into the story and make them empathize with Ruby." One key sequence occurs the morning after Ruby learns of her parents' death. "She faints, and we see weird light patterns on the ceiling," Kivilo details. "She has a mobile hanging in her room, and it's moving and painting the ceiling with shadows. You figure out pretty quickly that she's flat on her back, looking up at the ceiling. I used the Slant Focus lens to give the scene a sort of quirkiness. We rotated the camera and cut to an extreme close-up looking down on Ruby. We wildly overexposed the film, slowly rotated the camera on a three-axis head, ramped into slow motion and then went back to 24 frames as she opens her eyes. I think we were five stops overexposed. She looks totally white with her head on a pink pillow. It was a very graphic way of suggesting her disorientation." Later in the shoot, he used the Slant Focus lens to convey Ruby's POV for a scene in which Ruby's friends pay a visit after the Glasses have fed her tranquilizers.

The filmmakers wanted to create a stylized crash sequence for the moment when Ruby flashes back to her parents' deaths, and a strobing effect helps sell the illusion that the sequence was shot on a real road—which it wasn't. Kivilo first shot a test using a Swing & Shift lens that put the road slightly out of focus. "I placed individual white strobe lights on separate white cards that were placed on the 'road surface' to simulate the white lines of the highway," he explains. "When the strobes were fired sequentially, they created the

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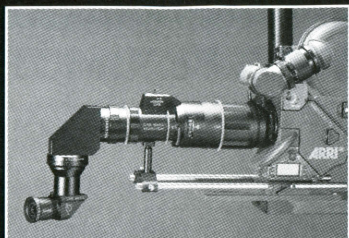
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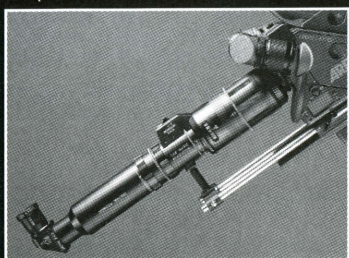
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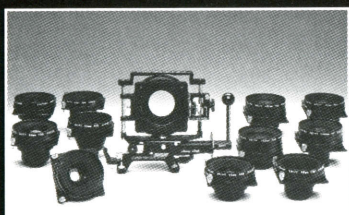
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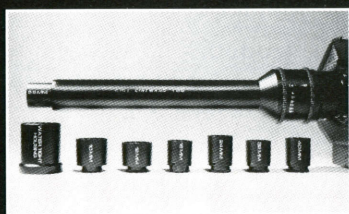
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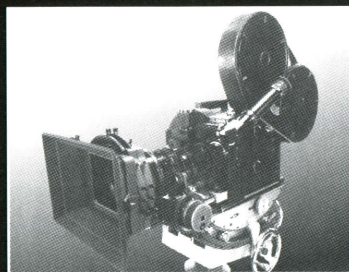


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Shattered Lives



Though the interior sets had numerous white walls that were a challenge to light, Kivilo felt that they created an appropriate ambience for *The Glass House*.

illusion that the characters were traveling down the road at night." The crew also sprayed water into the lens, which added to the effect's realism.

"The strobing had a really interesting effect, and that test led us to the idea of using red in the whole sequence, justified by tail and brake lights," Kivilo continues. "It was an organic process, because that one flashback led us to find hints of red in other scenes. It isn't symbolic in the sense that the color has specific meanings; it's meant to subtly jar the audience by presenting something that feels slightly uncomfortable. We want them to feel that something is not quite right." When he actually shot the sequence, Kivilo undercranked the camera at 6 fps and finally step-printed the negative to augment the jarring effect.

When Ruby and Rhett first arrive at the Glass home, the camera dollies from their point of view. It pushes in close, exploring each room as they see it, and then moves up the steps to the second story. When they enter the bedrooms, there is a glorious sunset, which Kivilo created with hard lights surrounding the outer edges of the set. As the story evolves, however, the house becomes increasingly cold and uninviting. "There's something primal about all of this

glass," Kivilo notes. "It can be hard, sharp or soft. You can see through it, or it can hide things. Sometimes it obscures things and you have to guess what that vague shape is behind the wall.

"Every film takes on a life of its own, and there was a sense of discovery while we were making this one," he says. "It began with the use of glass, and then Dan [Sackheim] said he wanted the film to get progressively colder until it turned electric blue. That idea felt right, and I embraced it."

Kivilo created increasingly bluer tones mainly through the use of gels, and he fine-tuned the effect during timing at Deluxe Labs in Hollywood. "We had a lot of blue built into the sets," he adds, "including a couple of walls and accent pieces. But basically I started out using quarter, then half, and finally full blue gels. I mapped out the level of blue in each part of the story because we weren't shooting in continuity. Toward the end, I was lighting everything full blue and sometimes one-and-a-half blue. I could have gone double, but I wanted to leave a bit of room for the printing stage."

The first scene which suggests that all is not well in the Glass house occurs when Ruby sneaks out of her room to change into her nightclothes. The hallway is dark except for a flickering light on the wall. "I went full blue and asked the lab to print it bluer," Kivilo notes. "It came back totally electric blue! It was too early in the film for that look, so I asked the timer to back off a bit. In the final version, the walls stay white but any highlights are blue."

Kivilo notes that shooting *The Glass House* on sets gave him much more control in tricky situations; the sets were on the same stage, and most were connected except for the basement. The main set was two stories high, which allowed the camera to follow characters as they moved

through the house. "[For daylight scenes,] we used a painted backdrop that matched the exterior location," he explains. "It was a bit daunting, but there were only three or four days of shooting daylight scenes on the sets. We built a swimming pool outside one main window, so there are reflections in the water and movement. We also had leaves and tree branches showing some movement, which helped to sell the illusion."

The painted backdrop was 50' high and more than 300' wide. Kivilo notes that it cost much less than a Trans-Lite and provided more flexibility for simulating exterior light in the film, which ranges from bright sunlight to a somber, overcast look. "There's a softness you get with painted backgrounds that feels right. I thought a Trans-Lite would feel a little too sharp and create too much of a 'processed' look."

During prep, the cameraman shot a small test with a representative section of the backing. "I found that for bright daylight scenes, we wanted to be about two stops overexposed. You still see a bit of detail, but it's soft enough that you can't tell it's a painting. There were some palm trees and other trees outside the windows in the foreground. We initially thought we'd light them in daylight because the sun would be hitting the trees, but we found that it looked more realistic when we let them go into silhouette against the sky."

After testing a number of film stocks, Kivilo chose Kodak Vision 200T 5274 as his main emulsion. "I compared it to [Vision 320T] 5277 and [Vision 500T] 5279, and although it was a struggle to boost the light levels enough for the 74, I preferred its grainless, saturated look," he notes. "We ended up shooting mostly at T2. These were very big sets, and I just liked the way [that stop] looked. It gave us an interior, daytime feel, and brighter lights didn't blow out as quickly."

Kivilo used 5279 for all night-



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Shattered Lives

Kivilo peeks out from behind the camera to ponder his approach to the numerous windows and white walls.



time exteriors and interiors, and he used Kodak EXR 5245 for daytime exteriors, augmenting it with an 81 Blue filter to maintain the show's overall blue look.

The cinematographer sur-

rounded the perimeter of the house exterior with hard light, augmented by two softboxes over the kitchen and living-room windows. Every light was pre-rigged on chain-motors and wired through a dimmer board,

which allowed him to orchestrate angles, colors and intensity from a single station. He blocked shots so that the camera could dolly through sets without catching reflections of itself, crew members or lights on the pond, glass windows or glass partitions.

Kivilo says he was able to use the 74 for daylight interiors on the big sets by lighting faces individually and applying a lot of firepower on the backdrop. He was able to let the walls go because they were white. The motivation for night interiors was generally provided by lamps and implied moonlight, though he didn't always limit himself to justifying light with sources. "We were mostly lighting the backing, the foreground actors and the set. On most sets, the glass was angled in a way that eliminated unplanned reflections, but in the kitchen the windows were set the

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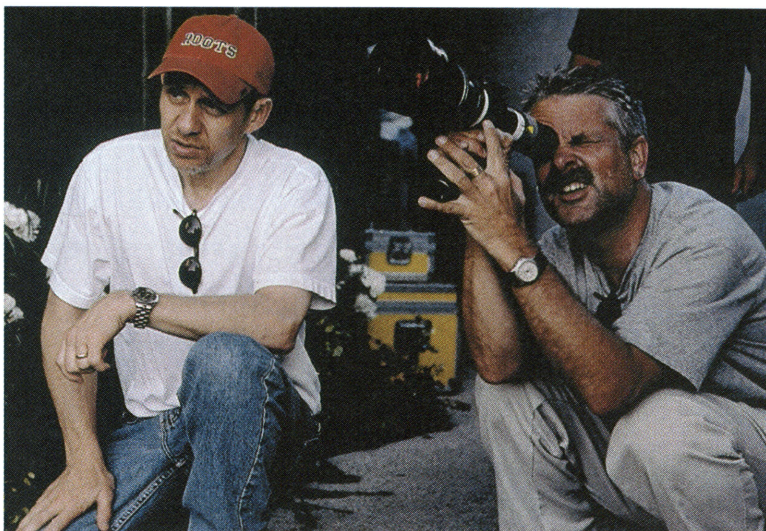
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opposite way. Fortunately, we were able to change the angle of those windows before we started shooting. Fighting reflections was a bit of a dance. I had a big softbox overhead in every room, and the two huge softboxes outside were pushing light in through the windows. The more lighting we did from the outside, the less we had to worry about hiding units on the sets — which was difficult to do. My original concept was that we'd build something into the set to create the shadows, but when we tested that idea it didn't work. We decided to put mirrors on the bottom of the reflecting pool to accentuate the patterns on the walls, and the constant rippling effect became a prevalent visual motif in the last part of the film.

"One of the most fascinating things about filmmaking is that there are no hard rules about what works,"



Director Daniel Sackheim (left) and Kivilo figure out their framing for a shot.

he reflects. "That's why there's always a sense of discovery. You can put a solitary figure standing by a window in a very wide shot, and it can mean so much more emotionally than a close-up of the person crying. At

other times, it's the opposite. Making those decisions and seeing them play out on the screen is what keeps film-making fascinating." ■



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SPECIAL FOCUS:

Capturing Ads on the Fly

Peter Gilbert brings a documentary aesthetic to a new series of commercials shot for the production company Nonfiction Spots.

by Patricia Thomson



COMMERCIALS

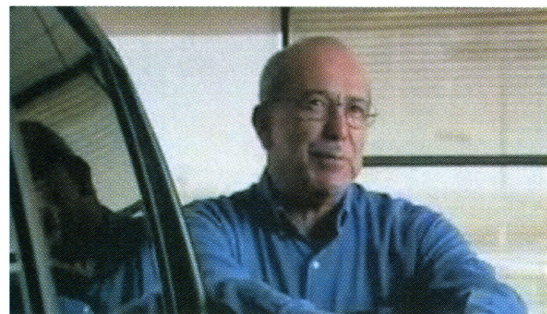
Peter Gilbert, co-producer and director of photography of *Hoop Dreams*, 'fesses up. "I've always been an awful jock," he admits with a laugh. The Chicago native has spent much of his life surrounded by athletes, but fortunately his sports prowess never really mattered. Instead, Gilbert earned his props filming athletes. In addition to the pros he shot in spots for Nike and Fila, who can forget the three teens whose basketball dreams and struggles with poverty formed the heart of *Hoop Dreams*, or the scores of American and North Vietnamese veterans bicycling from Hanoi to Saigon in *Vietnam: Long Time Coming*?

Nowadays, Gilbert is spending as much time making commercials with the production company Nonfiction Spots as he is producing documentaries through the collective Kartemquin Films. He directed a new antismoking campaign for Truth (The American Legacy Foundation) that will be unveiled this month. He recently completed a series for Ford that was the first national ad campaign shot with the HDW-F900 CineAlta, Sony's 24p high-definition (HD) camera. And he went back into the locker rooms and sports arenas to direct a campaign for the Madison Square Garden Network that featured the Knicks, Rangers and Yankees.

It was *Hoop Dreams* that first brought Gilbert to the attention of

Nonfiction Spots founder Loretta Jeneski, and it was his passion for documentary and his generosity in leading her to other nonfiction filmmakers that triggered the idea for a production company specializing in documentary-style ads. At the time *Hoop Dreams* hit theaters, Jeneski was running a commercial production company in Santa Monica. She got a call from an agency asking her to track down the directors of "that basketball film." She managed to locate the Kartemquin team, and although that particular project didn't pan out, she soon began working with Gilbert and Steve James, who directed and produced *Hoop Dreams*.

Gilbert encouraged Jeneski to check out the work of Barbara Kopple, for whom he'd done some shooting on the labor documentary *American Dream*. "I started screening her work and thought, 'Look at all she's done!'" recalls Jeneski. "Then I thought, would it be right to have a commercial production company with two documentary filmmakers? Would they compete against each other?" She quickly pushed that fear away. "I realized that even though they work in the same genre, each director has a different style and approach. I thought there should be a production company devoted exclusively to offering their talents as commercial directors, where they wouldn't be buried in the traditional spot shop."



Thus, Nonfiction Spots was born in 1995. Jeneski then built a roster of award-winning filmmakers who work in a variety of documentary styles. In addition to Gilbert, James and Kopple, the group includes *National Geographic*'s Bill Livingston, indie stalwarts Jessica Yu, Rob Bindler and Arlene Donnelly, and, most recently, a cooperative agreement with a comparable company in France called The Dissidents, which brings an influx of Gallic names to the Nonfiction stable.

Ford's "Blue Oval" campaign was shot in the 24p HD format by director/cinematographer Peter Gilbert. The filmmaker gave the central role to Cesar, an actual mechanic at the Tuttle Click Ford dealership in Irvine, California, who is shown interacting with customers to demonstrate his professionalism.

Capturing Ads on the Fly



The Ford ad shows viewers not only the company's product, but its personnel at work.

Jeneski thought the time was ripe for reality-based ads. "I had a feeling that what was going on with special effects and morphing was going to pass. When people see a car flying upside down in the air, they know that it's done in post. I felt there was going to be a return to spots that touched people. When they looked at them, they'd think, 'That's a real person, and that's a real emotion,' and they would relate to it."

For Gilbert, the chance to work with a commercial company that prioritized the documentary aesthetic was a welcome relief. Over the years, he had done plenty of conventional ad campaigns, shooting spots for McDonald's and other Chicago-based firms in order to help support his own films, which could be years in the making. (*Hoop Dreams* took seven.) He was occasionally hired to lend ads a more documentary approach, as in his series of spots for the Chicago Cubs in the mid-1980s, which showed what he calls "great little moments between players."

But his relationship with Nonfiction Spots enables him to

focus exclusively on the approach with which he's most comfortable. "I wasn't doing commercial work because I liked it," admits Gilbert. "With Nonfiction, for the first time I'm really enjoying this."

It's easy to see why. Take the MSG campaign, which Gilbert directed and shot with two other cinematographers, Jim Gucciardo and Peter Agliata. A real sense of fun and informality pervades these spots, as players riff on their teammates and co-workers. One spot features the New York Rangers' 'Czech Posse,' Petr Nedved, Jan Hlavac and Radek Dvorak, who are inseparable on the ice and off. We see them eat together, hang together and play together while fellow Rangers describe their teamwork and friendship. (There's even a fleeting reference to another famous team in a shot that mimics the classic *Abbey Road* image of the Beatles striding across a street.)

But most of the spots don't put the players in the foreground; rather, they feature people who work behind the scenes. One features Wayman Manning, the Knicks' young locker-room attendant, who proudly describes his job — everything from parking players' cars to washing hundreds of towels. His show-and-tell is intercut with deadpan commentary from the players, like Chris Childs' observation that "every time he parks my car, I get scratches on it." Wayman later counters, "It was just a tiny scratch."

In another spot, Wayman gets Alan Houston to sign a team jersey for him, whereas Knicks director of franchise operations Eddie Oliva can't score an autograph from his own player. Childs later dismisses Oliva's request with the cry, "Security!" Gilbert notes with a laugh, "A lot of times the players don't want to deal with management."

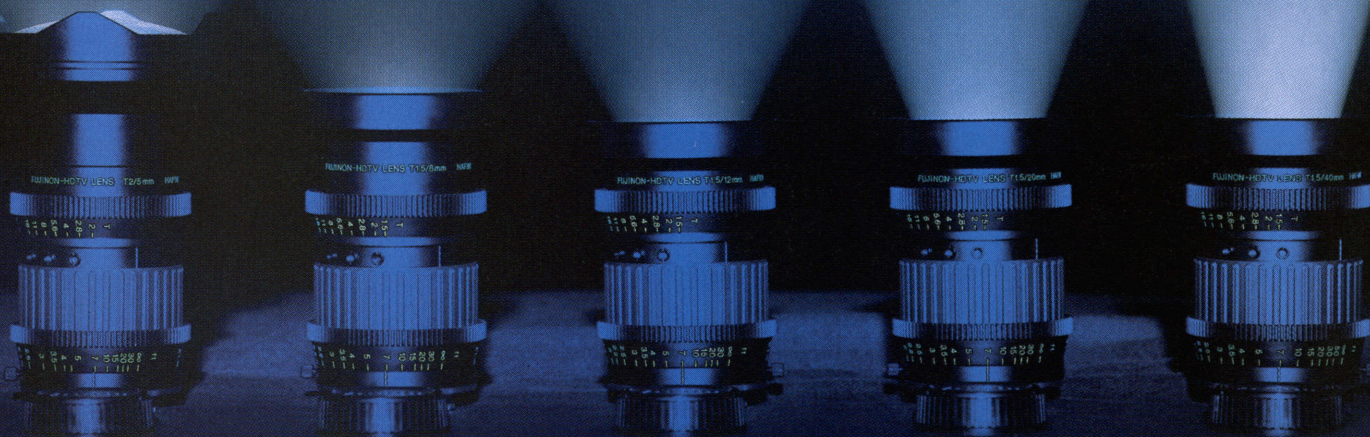
Funny, low-key and off the

cuff, the MSG campaign required a director who knew the sports scene. "I guess I have credibility in the sports world from doing so much sports stuff, and I also feel comfortable around athletes," says Gilbert. "I can approach athletes who would normally say, 'No, no, no, I don't want to be filmed.' Athletes are very careful about their lives. We say, 'Look, we're just having fun here. We're not asking you to be a role model, we're asking you to have fun and show off your personalities.' That's the thing that really drives the MSG spots."

To achieve that natural vibe, a director needs the players' full cooperation. They not only have to be available, but they also have to be *themselves*. That's where Gilbert's skills as a documentary filmmaker come into play — putting people at ease while catching them on the fly. "There's only one way to get athletes to do stuff like that," he observes. "I walk up to them in practice or before a game and say, 'Can you give me 15 seconds?' And they usually give me a lot more. We make it as painless as possible. We're also not asking them to read lines, which they really appreciate. They can be themselves, and fans react to that in a nice way."

The athletes were also happy not to take center stage for once. "One of the things that all the players loved is that most of the spots are not about players, but about other people who work in the organization," says Gilbert. "[They were happy] that the people who work really hard were going to get some exposure."

Viewers, in turn, feel as if they're privy to a special trip behind the scenes. That was a prerequisite for the spots, because the campaign's on-air motto is, "More angles, more insight. MSG. It's more than just a game." As Gilbert notes, "We try to show something that a normal fan wouldn't necessarily see,



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then have fun with it."

The fact that this campaign was shot over a two-year period is reflected in the medley of equipment used: an Aaton for Super 16mm, a DVcam, a regular HD camera, and the spanking new Sony CineAlta 24p camera. After his experience with the CineAlta on this series, Gilbert became a 24p enthusiast. His next series of ads, for Ford's Blue Oval program, was shot exclusively with the CineAlta.

For the Ford series, which focused on the Blue Oval certification process for Ford dealers with high customer-satisfaction ratings, Gilbert was working with "real people," not celebrity athletes accustomed to being in front of the camera. Shot at dealerships around the country while workplace activity continued, these were nonetheless full-blown commercial productions. "We had a full lighting package — a bunch of 6K Pars — so it was a relatively big thing," says Gilbert.

Although the lighting helped create a nice 35mm look, it didn't help calm the nerves of the dealers and customers featured in the spots. "One customer came in, and you could just see him freeze up," says Gilbert. "We wanted shots of him just talking and hanging out with the mechanic, so as soon as he came in, we just rolled."

And that, says the director, is one critical advantage of the CineAlta: being able to shoot for 40 minutes without stopping. "While working with real people, I don't have to slate. I can let the camera roll. I can walk in, talk to that person for a long time, and get him to say stuff with me right out of frame. They don't even know we're filming. If I were doing that in 35mm, I'd have to change the mag every eight minutes. This gives me a great directive ability. I can talk to people while we're filming and not worry about it."

Another group with less to

worry about is the ad agency, whose reps can sit in front of the HD field monitor, see exactly what they're getting, and sign off on it in a timely fashion. As Gilbert notes, one of the assets of "real people" ad campaigns is the potential for subjects to say things that are funnier and more interesting than anything a copywriter might dream up. "But if you're a creative and your job's on the line, that [freedom] worries you," he says with a laugh. "One of the things that's nice about 24p is that they're able to look, listen and play back. They're listening to digital sound; it's in sync already. They're not doing playback from a bad videotap. This creates a great comfort zone for them."

As in his documentaries, content rules in a Gilbert-directed spot. He is more interested in having viewers focus on what his subjects are saying than giving them tricky camera moves or flashy effects. In the MSG spots, the quick editing and funny commentary create the stylistic punch. The Blue Oval spots, in turn, have more elegance and sumptuousness, with greater attention to flattering lighting and a cool palette. But neither offers excessive camera movement.

In the Ford ads, however, there is the deployment of what are now considered tell-tale tropes of documentary camerawork: a snap zoom here, and a swooping, find-the-subject move there. Gilbert says agencies expect this from a documentary-style campaign, and he sees it as the result of everything from MTV to *ER* co-opting the documentary form to telegraph "reality." He notes that "things that were considered 'mistakes' by older generations, like slam zooms, are cut in now. I might be rolling the camera and run after someone to get in front of him to get a shot, and they might use that now. That isn't necessarily what I'd call good documentary filmmaking!"

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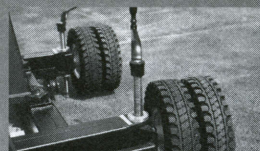
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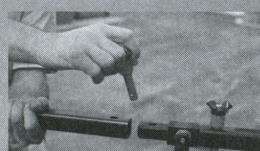
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Gilbert's spots for the Madison Square Garden Network features the New York Rangers' tight-knit, fast-skating Czech Posse of (from left) right wing Radek Dvorak, center Petr Nedved and left wing Jan Hlavac.

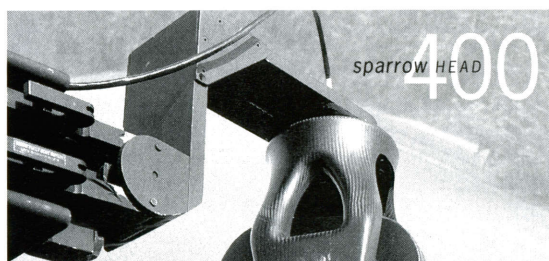


by feature-film cinematographer Maryse Alberti, there is just a touch of this style. "Maryse doesn't overdo it," Gilbert enthuses. Instead, she provides just enough to give the ads

some visual style and a sense of discovering the players in mid-action in a real setting.

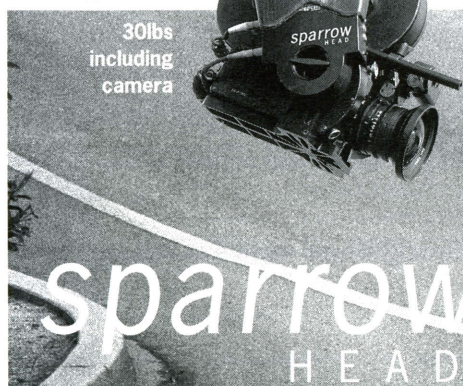
In Gilbert's view, reality-based ads like the Blue Oval

campaign are a way for companies to brand themselves as they grow bigger and more impersonal. "It's a way to humanize them," he says. The fact that a corporation of Ford's



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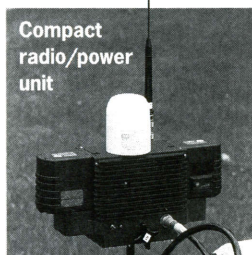


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size and might would let its employees speak on camera without a controlled script is, he feels, "a pretty gusty thing for Ford to do."

Less risky, in Gilbert's opinion, was the company's acquiescence to 24p. "For \$80, I can get 40 minutes of synced material that's ready to load into the Avid. I don't have to go to a lab; I don't have to do dailies. I can look at it right there." Plus, there's no video artifacting; there's a 16x9 image that equates very well to 1.85:1 and can easily go to letterbox or to 1.33:1; and there's high enough resolution that allows for a softer video image, without the harsh edges "that make us cringe." As Gilbert sums it up, "All I know is, it looks good."

Not only was *Hoop Dreams* shot on every conceivable video format, but the documentary was also the first feature that originated on video and was blown up to 1.85

after it was picked up for theatrical distribution. "We had to re-online the film and were the learning experience for what to do," he notes. Years before that, Gilbert jokes, he worked on an HD project "when HD cameras were the size of a small bedroom."

"There are a gazillion formats now," he concludes. "Beta, DigiBeta, DVC, DVC PAL, 1080i. Like 35mm, 24p is just another tool, but with 24p I feel for the first time that I can go out and shoot videotape and don't have to make an excuse for it." ■



Gilbert creates his reality-based spots for Nonfiction Sports in Santa Monica, California. Steve James, his partner and collaborator on the acclaimed basketball documentary *Hoop Dreams*, is also repped by the agency.

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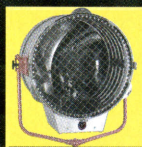
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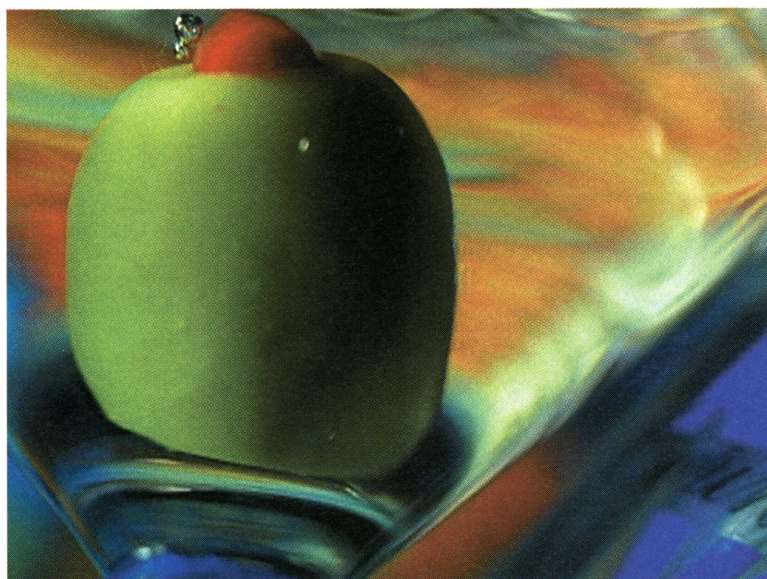
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'Tini Time

Director/cinematographer Bruce Nadel crafts a stylish commercial that captures the allure of the Absolut martini.

by Stephanie Argy



Bruce Nadel, a New York-based director and cinematographer, recently created an Absolut commercial intended for Italian movie theaters. The spot, shot in luminous, highly saturated colors, is a stylized visual essay on the making of a vodka martini.

Nadel, who works for both American and European advertising agencies, says that while U.S. agencies ask several directors and companies to bid on the same storyboards, Europeans present a general concept and expect the director to elaborate on it and generate his own boards as part of the bidding process. In the

case of the Absolut spot, the agency — a small creative group from Milan — merely proposed a stylish, graphic spot about mixing a martini. “They were looking for something that would be fun,” recalls Nadel.

The spot itself is very simple: a woman prepares the drink. At the end, when she presents it, she wears a red clown nose, which leads to the final caption, “Ogni clown sa preparare un perfetto Martini.” (“Any clown can prepare a perfect martini.”) To make the simple premise magical, Nadel photographed each aspect of the process in minute detail.

“Did you ever really study a martini?” he asks. “How can you see an olive differently?” In the commercial, two olives fly into the air and bounce off each other, and another travels down and bounces around the bottom of the glass. Nadel’s goal was to make every element beautiful, and to exaggerate all of the simple elements of the classic cocktail — the vodka, olives, lemons and glass — by making them big in the frame. The style he envisioned was crisp and clean, like an Irving Penn photograph.

He also wanted a look that would differentiate the spot from other commercials, especially those about beverages. One night, as he drove along the West Side Highway in Manhattan, Nadel passed a crew of road workers. Every hundred feet or so were bright mercury-vapor lights that cast a strong, greenish light. “It’s an almost eerie kind of illumination,” Nadel says.

The next day, he found a construction company that rented the lights and ordered two of them delivered to his studio for tests. He found that while the lights gave off an incredible amount of illumination, they remained very cool. This enabled Nadel to bring them very close to the faces of his talent. Because he could shoot within 12" to 14" of his subjects, the lights created

a burned-out look that he found very pleasing and appropriate for the Absolut commercial.

The lights also affected colors in unusual ways. Every color reacted differently, but the overall look was both saturated and cool. One ingredient of a vodka martini is a lemon twist, and the lemons shown in the commercial became almost luminescent under the mercury-vapor lights. Nadel found that the lights also created rich blacks and had a beautiful effect on liquids. With a single light source and no fill, he was able to create sculptural shots of the pouring vodka.

At the time Nadel did the Absolut shoot, the lights had to be powered by special generators running in the street outside his stage. Since then, though, he and his gaffer, Gregg Rosinsky, have had transformers custom-made so that the lights can be run on ordinary electrical current.

Nadel shoots commercials like this in his own studio, OneSuch Films, which takes up three floors of a building on 27th Street in New York City. The building holds all of Nadel's camera and lighting equipment so that he can shoot anything he wants at a moment's notice. "It allows me to play around and experiment," he says. "It takes a project from the 'what-if' stage to the 'let's-take-a-look' stage."

Having his own studio gives Nadel the luxury of extensive preparation for his jobs. For the Absolut spot, he set up the objects he was going to shoot and took hundreds of digital stills with his Olympus C-3030 camera. He imported these into his Mac, manipulated them and then assembled a version of the commercial made from the stills. This allowed him to work out his pace and lens choices, and to see which angles would follow which. "It was very studied. None of it was casual," he says.

Nadel has had his studio for 14



Opposite: A ripe green olive basks in the swirling vodka of an Absolut martini. Nadel's goal on the spot was to beautify and enlarge every element of the classic cocktail. This page: Nadel added a unique twist to the commercial's color palette by lighting the spot with mercury-vapor units, which helped him capture rich blacks and luminescent highlights.



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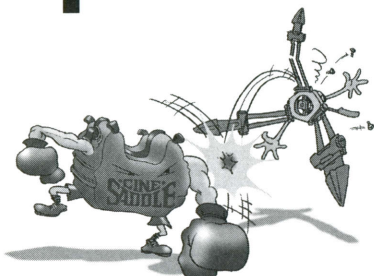
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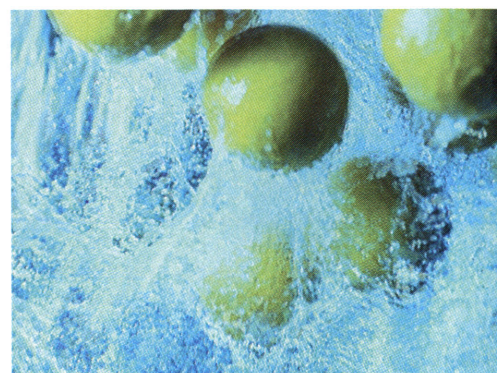
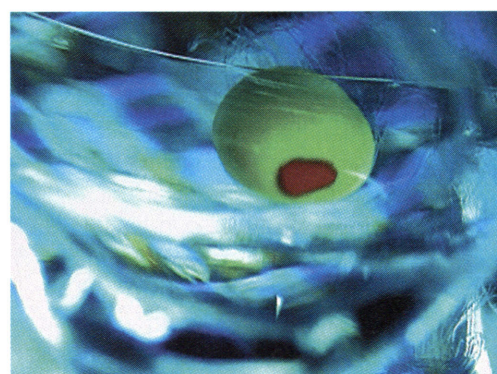
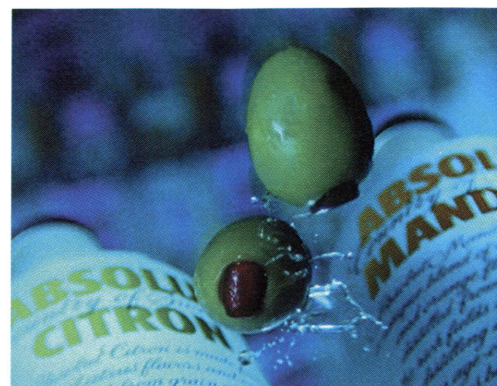
'Tini Time

years. Originally a commercial producer, he first went behind the camera when a director with whom he was working got kidney stones and couldn't move. "He said, 'I need you to operate the camera,'" remembers Nadel. "I climbed up on the camera and put my eye to the eyepiece. I knew then that this [process] was magical. It was a wonderful thing." From then on, Nadel shot whenever he could, but he often found it frustrating to work for other directors, trying to be diplomatic and presenting ideas so that they seemed not intrusive but collaborative. He soon found that the best approach was to begin directing as well. "It switches," he says. "You're a cameraman/director, and then you become a director/cameraman."

Commercials have proven to be the perfect venue for Nadel, and he has spent his entire career making them. He jokes that he has a short attention span and can only handle 30 seconds or, if he really puts his mind to it, 60 seconds (the length of most European spots). "It's like a lifetime, like an epic," he says. But the core of his work is visual storytelling. "You can make an arc for a story in 30 seconds. You can tell a real story."

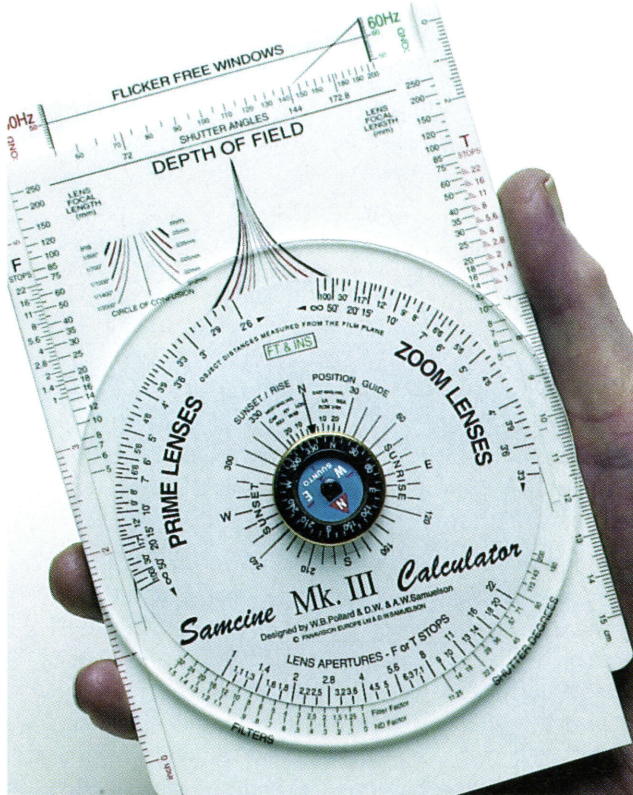
In addition to having his own facility, Nadel has his own cameras, including the Arriflex 35-3 that he used on the Absolut spot. For high-speed shots of tumbling olives and pouring liquids, he rented a Photosonics 4E. Nadel found that he got the best results running the Photosonics at 180 fps, 240 fps and 300 fps; because there is no crystal-sync speed control on the camera, running at speeds that were multiples of 60 fps worked best to eliminate flicker. "Other speeds looked like a mistake," he says. Even at the speeds he chose, the image flickered, but he found that the effect worked well in this particular situation.

Nadel's lenses on the commercial came out of his own Zeiss set, and he tended to stay at the wide end



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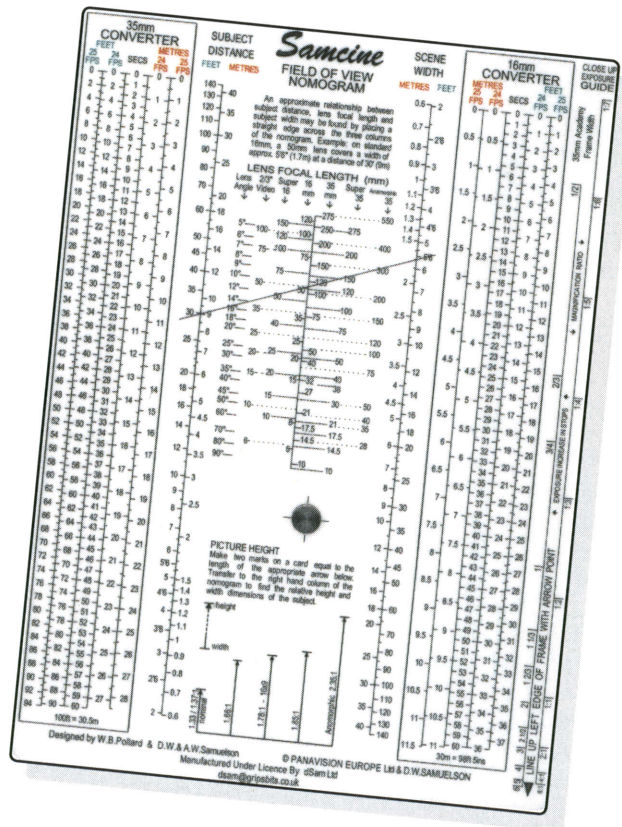
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The ad's tag line maintains that "any clown can prepare a perfect martini."

of the range. "I've fallen in love with the 14mm Zeiss," he says. He also used a 200mm Zeiss macro for some of the extreme close-ups.

Nadel's film stock for the Absolut shoot was Kodak Vision 250D 5246. He often beta-tests new stocks for Kodak; the company will send him four 400' rolls of film with a generic label and an ASA, and ask him to put the stock in a separate mag and do one take with it at the end of every setup. "I give them a little critique [each time]," he says.

Nadel treated the image as simply as possible on the spot; he used no gels, no diffusion or other filtration, and no swing-and-tilt lenses. "That was the intent — to do nothing," he says. Instead, he wanted to keep the image raw and see what the lights would do. In general, he adds, people tend to shoot more cleanly now than they used to, with less bleach-bypass work and less pushing. "The capabilities in post are such that you can really fine-tune and manipulate the look," he relates.

Working with European agencies means that the post process is also very different from the way it is on most jobs. American agencies whisk commercial footage away to an editor, and the director is rarely

involved as the spot is cut. "You either don't have time, or it gets edited in another city," says Nadel. But European agencies expect the director to deliver a finished piece of work. "It really is the auteur system. That's why I like working with the Europeans. There's a tremendous amount of freedom that you don't get here. I only do about 10 percent of my work overseas, but I wish it were more."

He notes that even American agencies want production companies to offer more ideas about post than they might have in the past. "You package [your offer] as a one-stop creative shop," he explains. "I put together the package — this is what we'd like to shoot, this is an editor I work with a great deal, this is a colorist we like to use. That's a new phenomenon, and it's really nice." Everyone's work is intertwined in the look of the final project, and when he and the colorist and editor are allowed to work together as a group, they can discuss what they're going to do very early in the process. This allows him to benefit from the input of his colleagues — in the case of the Absolut spot, colorist Victor Mulholland of Riot East and editor Stephen Cheifitz of V2 Editing.

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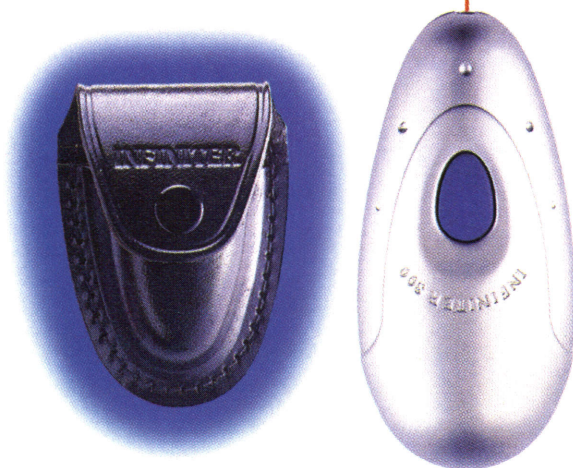
According to Nadel, a commercial like the Absolut spot would have been very different before the era of dot-com commercials. Back then, he remembers,

advertising, especially in the United States, took itself very seriously, and spots were shot in a slick, classical style. But the dot-com companies brought an irreverence that trans-

formed the commercial industry; their ads often had little production value, but they were entertaining and made people more willing to accept less polished commercials. "It really opened our eyes and made us very accepting of different looks," says Nadel. He notes that in the Absolut spot, the extreme colors, unusual framing and chaotic camera motion probably would not have been sanctioned even a few years ago.

At the same time, in an interesting reversal, the classical look is now being perceived as the new, cutting-edge approach, according to Nadel. He recently did a spot for a Pontiac dealer in Chicago called "Screwed." The spot, recognized by the Association of Independent Commercial Producers and installed in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, simply features a brass screw going into a board to demonstrate how other car

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dealers treat their customers, and it's lit in a rich, textural, classical way. Nadel remembers that when the Unger Group agency came to him about the spot, they specified that they didn't want "any of that wacky dot-com" stuff. "They felt that a more traditional look would separate their ad from other advertising," he says.

"The perception of what's new, what's good, what's old and what's pleasing is an interesting thing!"

Though Nadel specializes in mid-range commercials, he believes that even in larger spots, "clever" has replaced "big." His own agency clients now seem to be more interested in content and storyline. "It's

not bigger production," he says. "It's more graphic, more engaging." And he already feels that the look of the Absolut spot is catching on with his American customers. "Sears came to me and said, 'We want the look of Absolut.' Here I am, doing work for Sears, and they want it to look like a cool Italian spot." ■

Nadel's stylish work is represented in a collage of images from the Absolut ad.

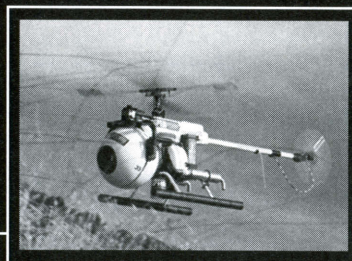
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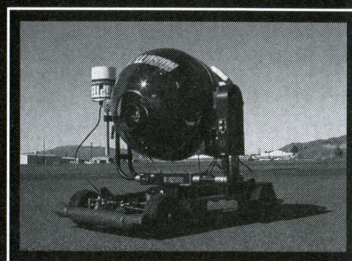
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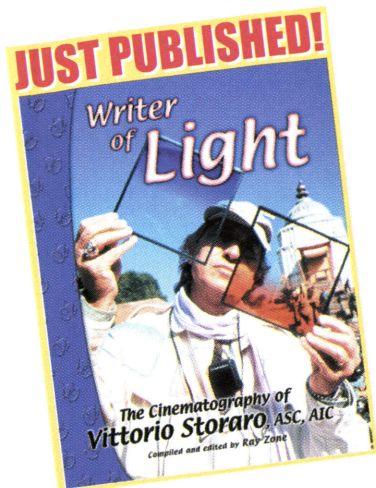


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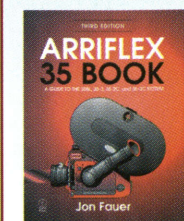
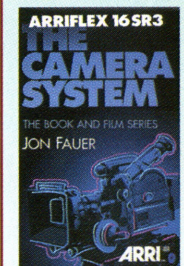
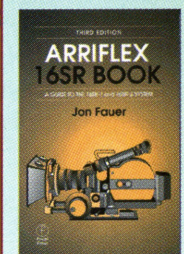
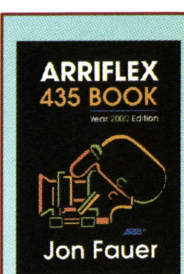
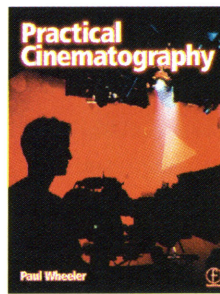
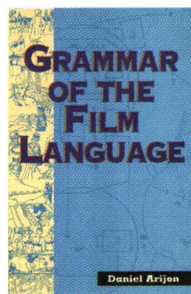
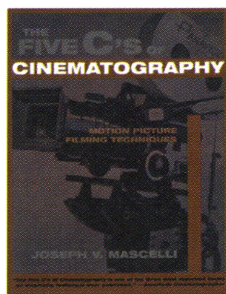
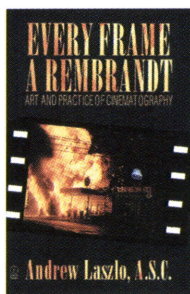
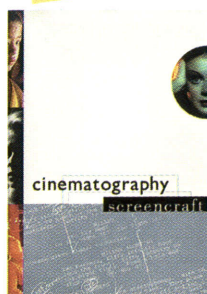


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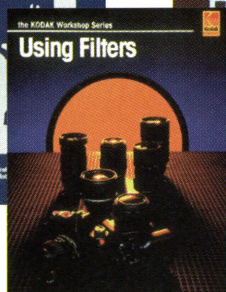
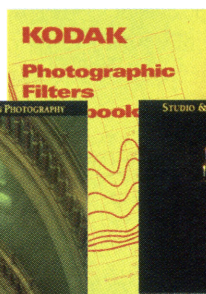
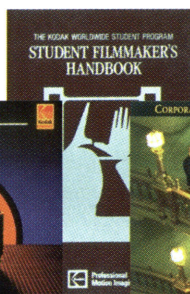
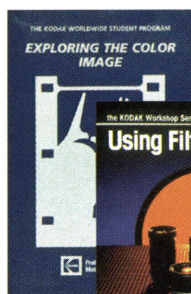


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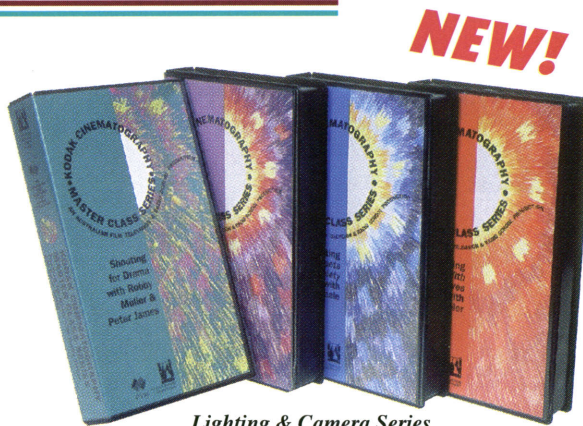


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An Ode to Teamwork



Ford's new campaign for its 2002 Explorer SUV combines Tobias Schliessler's cinematography with artful post effects supervised by Simon Brewster of A52.

by John Pavlus

During last summer's pump-price chokehold, environmental harmony probably wasn't the first thing one would think of upon seeing a new sport-utility vehicle unveiled. But Ford's 2002 Explorer campaign, which broke in late April and ran through the summer months, hinges on that concept — literally. The 30-second spot, entitled "Geyser," showcases the new Ford rumbling across a starkly beautiful rock landscape while steam from natural springs hisses at its wheels. As plumes of hot spring water — synchronized to the beats of

Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" — blast forth in the vehicle's wake, a voiceover triumphantly intones, "Even nature is singing its praises."

The ambitious spot required a creative fusion of two formidable talents: AICP- and Clio Award-winning cinematographer Tobias Schliessler and renowned visual-effects supervisor Simon Brewster of Hollywood-based A52. Reteaming with director and frequent collaborator Robert Logevall, Schliessler captured the spot's compelling action on location in Iceland; Brewster later set about creating and enhancing its otherworldly, blue-gray color palette on a Discreet Inferno platform. "It's a bit of a tricky spot," Schliessler confides. "There's a fine line between what he does and what I do."

Despite the heavy role A52 played during postproduction, the clip's most spectacular special effect was actually created practically on location. "We needed to get the harsh reality of all that spring water going through live and splattering on the ground," says Brewster. "It would've been an incredibly difficult task to pull off [via] CG." Recalls Schliessler, "Originally we weren't quite sure how it was going to work. There was talk that we were going to have to shoot certain geysers against green-screen so that they could be moved around [in post]. But Robert likes to do things in camera as much as possible, so all of the geysers were there on radio control, hidden behind rocks. We were prepared to [composite] it digitally, but when we got there, we saw that it was going to work really nicely, and I think we got a very natural look."

Schliessler, who usually enjoys a lengthy collaboration with Logevall during location scouting, instead came aboard "Geyser" with three days to prep. "If I have an afternoon off, I always say, 'If you want me to go look at the location, or come a couple days early on the spot, I'll do that,'

the cinematographer says. "But I was shooting before this [project], so I wasn't able to come in earlier; Robert had already picked the location. It was our first time in Iceland, and we'd always wanted to go there."

The spot's craggy setting looks downright alien, but according to Schliessler, "that location was only about half an hour outside of Reykjavik — about 300 or 400 yards from the highway. I think it was one of those occasions when Robert scouted for three days, and on the way home he just looked out and said, 'Wow, this is perfect!'"

As it turns out, the icy character of the location effectively augmented the dramatic geyser effects. "The lovely thing about Iceland is that they have so many hot springs everywhere, and they can load up trucks full of hot water, which you can't do here. The weather was so cold that we got natural steam coming out of barrels full of water, and it worked quite beautifully." Of course, those conditions — "minus 20 degrees and about minus 30 wind chill," Schliessler recalls — created some special difficulties during the four-day shoot. "Everything gets tougher, not so much for me but for my camera assistants," he says. "We protected the camera, but I couldn't use spray deflectors because as soon as the water erupted and hit the lens, it immediately froze. So I just put a clear filter in front of the lens. We had to take it out [for each take] and put a new one in."

Because the spot called for a variety of slow-motion coverage in the harsh environment, Schliessler brought an Arriflex 435 package from London. He shot most of the coverage in varying degrees of slow motion ranging from 60-150 frames per second; he also narrowed the angle of the camera's variable shutter to lend a sharpened look to the geyser's water droplets. In one particularly difficult setup, he discovered just how hardy the camera really was:

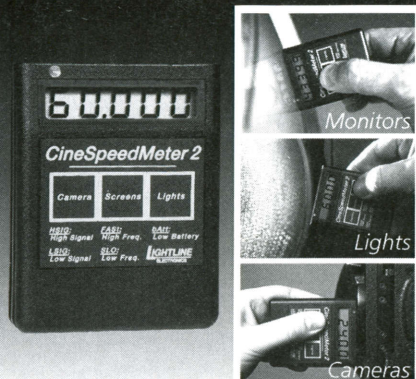


Opposite page: Ford turns its 2002 Explorer loose in the harsh volcanic landscape of Iceland, where steaming hot water erupted from geysers and the windchill was -30°F .

Above: A series of shots from the ad highlight cinematographer Tobias Schliessler's favored use of Storm Blue and Paradise Blue Grad filters. Though Schliessler strives for in-camera visuals as much as possible, visual-effects supervisor Simon Brewster and the artists at A52 helped lend the spot its unique look. One of their contributions was to color the boulders green with red streaks.

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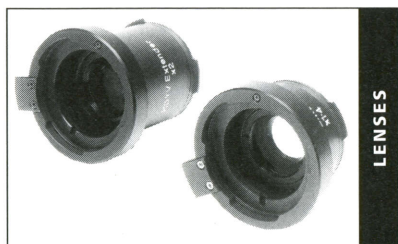
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An Ode to Teamwork



The desolation of the Icelandic landscape lends the spot an otherworldly feel.

"We did an overhead shot where you see the geyser come straight up at us. Because there was no big camera crane in Iceland, we used a Condor construction crane. I was sitting up there with my camera assistant looking straight down, and this geyser exploded higher than we thought. We got covered in water, and in literally 10 seconds we were all ice cubes! It wasn't dangerous, but it was unexpected, and it was pretty amazing that the camera could withstand all that stress."

The weather's vicissitudes compelled Schliessler to rely mainly on natural illumination, with only two 12K HMI Pars serving as supplemental units. "I find that I can create a look by more of an intuitive process. The trick on this spot was to have as much backlight as possible on the geysers, because if you don't backlight water it doesn't show up," he explains. "We basically worked around the light, shooting certain directions when the sun was in the right place. I used a lot of reflectors and big 12-by-12-foot silvers. We were trying to be true to the environment, keep it a little cooler. I tried to shoot the wider shots in the morning or in the afternoon so that the shadows were longer. I also like to play outside with negative fill to enhance the natural light and make

it a bit more stylized. I used 20-by-20 blacks to make the shadows darker. It would be nice for three or four hours and then cloud over, so when the sun went away I'd use the two Pars to recreate the backlight. Then I would use negative fill instead of my reflectors.

"I had two Condor construction cranes, one for camera and one for lighting, especially for the backlighting. I took the lenses out [of the Pars] and made them extremely spotty, and I could spot them onto certain parts of the water. I was trying to keep the car lit as naturally as possible, but I also wanted to give it an edge because it's definitely the character of this piece, so I sometimes set a couple [Pars] up so that the car would get a nice kick when it drove by."

Schneider grad filters also figured significantly in Schliessler's strategy. He employed .3, .6 and .9 Neutral-Density grads, as well as Storm Blue and Paradise Blue — sometimes sandwiching five or six at a time in front of the lens. "I'm definitely a grad person," he enthuses. "On a set you use the lights to enhance what you want to see; I use my grads that way when I'm outside. It's too big an area to darken the foreground, so the grads do that for me. I used the Storm Blue for the skies,

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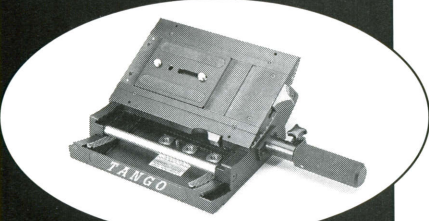
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and the Paradise Blue for the water. There were a couple of shots with water or ice in the foreground, and I wanted to enhance that with a bit of color.

"I also use the polarizer pretty well all the time when I'm outside, just to take reflections away or put them on. It makes the car look better. I can shift the reflections where I want them to be and can also darken the sky. In this case, I didn't necessarily want to take the highlights on the car away — I just find in general that the polarizer gives me good choices."

Such heavy glass in front of the camera dictated very specific stock and lens requirements. The cinematographer didn't run any stock tests, but instead zeroed in on Kodak's Vision 250D 5246 daylight film for the entire shoot, rating it normally. "I try to give every spot a different look, whether it's [via] bleach bypass, or maybe using really fine 50 ASA film. In this case, I ordered the 250D in advance because it takes some time to get there. I knew it was exactly what I needed for this spot, because I wanted to have enough exposure for the skinny shutter angle, my grads and polarizers, and for shooting slow motion. All those things take stop away. And on top of it, we didn't know whether it was going to be sunny or cloudy."

Schliessler employed a set of Cooke primes because of their "forgiving treatment" of backlight and flares. He appreciated their handling of blacks and contrast, as well as their exceptional capture clarity. "I find that I can put any number [of Schneider grad filters] in front of the lens and it doesn't affect sharpness." He was able to maintain a T-stop between 5.6 and 8 for most of the coverage.

The filmmakers also used a Revolution lens (similar to Panavision's Frazier system) to create a special insert shot in which the camera appears to peer up at the Explorer from within a bubbling

spring. "That was done outside in a parking lot," Schliessler explains. "We used a model car that was about a foot long and a Plexiglas tank full of water. We shot it outside against natural sky. The camera was underneath the Plexiglas, pointing up. I lit the car from the side and backlit the water with the HMI Pars. They built a little fake rock wall, and on top of that we drove the radio-controlled miniature car along, creating bubbles with air pressure in front of the lens. At the right spot, we let the air pressure go, and it looked like one of these geysers about to go off."

The first two days' dailies were processed in London, and the second batch was processed at Fotokem in Los Angeles; the telecine transfer was done by Stefan Sonnenfeld at Company 3. It turned out that Schliessler's extensive image filtration had some consequences for Brewster's post duties. "We need plates that aren't enhanced by filtering," explains Brewster. "You get into strange situations with visual effects — sometimes you have to ask the cinematographer *not* to shoot it how he wants it, which is a really tough thing, because he's responsible for getting really good pictures and you're asking him not to use half his toolbox. Tobias is great because you can talk to him and discuss it. But he popped them on, and then we had to work around them."

Chuckling, Schliessler admits that he "didn't want to quite give it away completely. Usually I don't do a lot of spots this way. If I did one again, maybe I'd ease off on my grads, because I think it makes Simon's life a little harder. But when I work with Robert, we like to [create] as much of our own look as we can at the beginning to set the palette, and then let them enhance it [in post]. Robert and I both feel the same way: we like to look through the camera and be excited about it. If you don't add those things, you don't get that same excitement level when you

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An Ode to Teamwork

shoot. But Simon is extremely talented, and the spot became a collaboration with him."

Brewster began by conducting what he calls a "flat pass" of the negative on a Spirit telecine, "to get as much data that's on that film as you can and then expand it later." From there, he and his team created digital traveling mattes for separate components of the image in order to tweak their coloring individually. "We could figure out how silver the car could be against the background, whether we needed to drop the background down a stop and lift the car up a stop, while maybe working the windows in a different sense," he says. "That's really hard, nitty-gritty work because you're tracking a three-dimensional truck and building all of these little mattes that work with it." Brewster also created articulated mattes for the geysers in order to synchronize their eruptions to the symphonic soundtrack.

In the end, the effects team was even able to salvage some visual details that were lost despite Schliessler's valiant efforts in the Icelandic weather. "The [camera team] got a lot of steam and water vapor and particles [in the image], which meant that you really couldn't see some of the color that was actually on the ground," Brewster says. "So apart from working with the color palette, we went back in and made boulders green, put red streaks into the rocks, and other things like that."

Despite the slight overlap in their creative endeavors, both Schliessler and Brewster consider their collaboration a success. "We had to do everything as seamlessly as possible," Brewster asserts, "and I think we got there." Schliessler adds, "What we did for this spot worked really well, so why not use the right tools for the right project? I love sharing credits — that's what this whole business is about." ■

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Short Takes

A Bureaucratic Nightmare



A woman struggles to liberate herself from an oppressively bureaucratic world in a new music video for the band Jazz Pharmacy, filmed in Super 16mm by Francois Dagenais, CSC.

A Low-Budget Canadian Video Rages Against the Machine

by Stephanie Argy

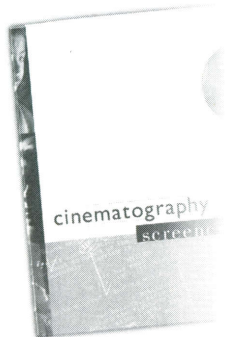
One of the nominees for this year's Canadian Society of Cinematographers Award for music-video cinematography was Francois Dagenais, CSC for Jazz

Pharmacy's "Born Leader." The first music-video effort by director Lewis Cohen, who is known for experimental documentaries that utilize abstract images, "Born Leader" was made for a mere \$8,000 U.S.

The video centers on a woman driven to liberate herself from a bureaucratic world, and Dagenais and Cohen realized that because of the small

budget, they would have to take some chances if they wanted to make the video interesting. Because Cohen wanted a look with strong colors, Dagenais suggested cross-processing; to demonstrate what the results would look like, he showed the director the movie *Three Kings* and a Kodak sample.

Dagenais ultimately shot the video on Kodak Ektachrome 7239 and



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by Peter Ettedgui

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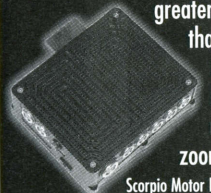
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7240 reversal stocks, then cross-processed the film at The Lab in Toronto, a boutique facility that Dagenais says is willing to accommodate unusual requests. The cinematographer also used a small amount of Kodak 7222 Double-X stock, shot through a Tiffen #8 Yellow filter.

The main location for the video was the office of a production company, Diversus, where Cohen used to work. An old primary school that had been converted into an office, the building had won an architectural prize for being the

**The only dolly on
the shoot was a
doorway dolly
operated by a film
student. "A
doorway dolly is
better than no
dolly at all," notes
Dagenais.**

best converted-use building. Dagenais says that the location truly enhanced the video, because it offered many features that would help him build a strong visual design, including plentiful glass and columns to shoot through and around.

The office was decorated mainly in neutral colors, and Dagenais and Cohen decided to dress the cast in strong colors that would make them pop out from their surroundings. Bought at a vintage store, the wardrobe was relatively inexpensive, and together with the location it helped make the video work on a minuscule budget. "We were not trying to compete with million-dollar music videos, where they build sets for a month," notes Dagenais.

The shoot took place in early August 2000 and lasted a day and a



Above: The filmmakers had to stretch their low budget as far as possible, so they chose a convenient primary location: a production company where director Lewis Cohen used to work. Below: The modest budget also required the filmmakers to be visually inventive. Here, the onslaught of bureaucracy is represented symbolically by hanging telephones that surround the distressed heroine.

half; the first day was spent at the main location, and the second was spent above and near the band's practice space, where the video's female protagonist smashes apart a computer. Cohen, who was very involved in the video's props, provided the computer — an old one he had kept around for a

year in the event of a project like this. At another moment in the video, a flickering image is reflected in the woman's glasses; the footage came from one of Cohen's documentaries.

Dagenais says Cohen "was a good candidate to make the switch to music videos," noting that the director



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Dagenais (far right) blocks a scene for camera. Below: The cinematographer checks his framing for a shot. His work on the video was nominated for a Canadian Society of Cinematographers Award in the music-video category.

had an innovative approach to the project. In one scene, for example, Cohen wanted to incorporate an image of a falling phone. "I thought, 'How the hell is he going to do this?'" Dagenais recalls. Cohen's solution was completely old-school: he hung the phone on a clothesline and had someone off-camera turn it around and around. "It had a very naïve effect, like a film from the '20s," the cinematographer says.

Dagenais adds that even though "Born Leader" was Jazz Pharmacy's first

music video, the band members were remarkably savvy about the whole process. "They were very film-literate and had seen a lot of European films," he says. Some of the musicians had done some photography, so they even knew the right questions to ask about the lenses Dagenais was using.

The camera used on the video was an Aaton XTR Super 16, and the filmmakers used a wide range of lenses, including an OpTex 5.5mm, Zeiss primes ranging from 12mm to 100mm, and a Canon 8-64mm zoom. To



get some extreme in-camera effects, Dagenais would occasionally unlock the lens and shake it in place; at other points he would open and close the magazine during a take. For one shot, when the lead singer is introduced in a boardroom, Dagenais created flash-frames by opening and closing the mag while his assistant simultaneously rocked the lens.

Dagenais relied mainly on Par cans to light the video. He had used the lights on a feature before but had never used them with a dimmer. Having recently seen a lot of live shows using Par cans and dimmers, he was impressed by the possibilities that this lighting strategy offered, and he thought that the dramatic, operatic effect of dimmers would be especially well-suited to "Born Leader." He also remembered how cheap the lights were to rent (\$20-\$25 a day), which was an important concern on this particular project.

In addition to the Par cans, which were occasionally gelled blue or sepia, Dagenais used natural light and Kino Flos, as well as Pocket Pars to light up dark corners. To get a ghostly, overexposed look on faces, he used White Pro-Mist #2 filters on the lenses and set the Par cans five stops over key.

The only dolly on the shoot was a doorway dolly operated by a film student. Although the student turned out to be a very good dolly grip, Dagenais protected himself by using wide lenses that would minimize the apparent bumpiness of the movement. He adds that the nature of a music video makes it easy to cut around any bumps. "A doorway dolly is better than no dolly at all," he notes.

Dagenais fought to use the Spirit Datacine for the transfer because he feels that it's the best machine for material shot on 16mm. In addition, it offered many filters that could enhance the look even more. On top of the filtration that he used on set, he added Black 5 and White 5 on the Spirit, the heaviest diffusion available.

Still, he tried to do as much on set and in camera as possible, so that he could go into telecine with an image

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very close to what he wanted. With a strong base, he explains, he could go much further in telecine and use his time there to finesse subtleties, rather than creating the entire look from scratch. During the telecine sessions, he mainly crushed the blacks and made the whites burn. He also occasionally sought to overexpose faces more and push the Par-can effects.

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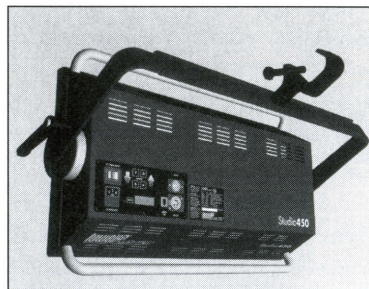


Essence of Fluorescence

As a result of a collaboration with noted lighting pioneer Gary Regester, Lowel-Light Manufacturing has expanded its line of professional fluorescent lighting systems to include the new LowelScandles. The multi-tasking fluorescent fixture is designed for a quick and easy choice of light size and quality through a fast change of accessories.

LowelScandles provides 200-watt daylight- or tungsten-balanced illumination emanating from eight 24-watt lamps that can be switched in pairs for variable output. The fixture boasts a high-efficiency output of 220 footcandles at 5' when used with its supplied Collapsible Front Reflector. The fixture can also use eight 18-watt compact (7" in length) fluorescent lamps.

It also has an auto-setting, dual-voltage input and a flicker-free, high-efficiency internal ballast. LowelScandles is designed to be used with a softbox. A rotating Universal Speed Ring is permanently installed on the fixture for this purpose and will accept still photography



or film/video softbox attachments by Plume, Chimera, Westcott and Photoflex, among others. A variety of custom accessory reflectors are available.

Lowel-Light has also updated the Lowel/Fluo-Tec ETL/CSA-approved studio line of fluorescent equipment by adding state-of-the-art electronics with integrated DMX-512 circuitry, allowing full control from any DMX console.

A new membrane-style digital control panel on the back of the unit allows manual dimming, manual storage of four dimmer settings and lamp-life monitoring. The DMX address for the unit is easily set and displayed in the unit's LED window for quick referral,

especially when multiple units are hung on a grid. An installed Remote Port will accept the planned IR remote control accessory, which will allow remote dimming without the need of a console.

The full Lowel/Fluo-Tec studio line consists of five dimmable and five non-dimmable fluorescent fixtures that use from two to eight compact 55-watt fluorescent lamps in daylight or tungsten color temperatures, as well as numerous accessories.

Lowel-Light Mfg., Inc., (718) 921-0600, fax (718) 921-0303, e-mail: info@lowel.com, Web site: www.lowel.com.

Everything But the Kitchen Sink

London-based Zero-G Ltd. has issued an all-encompassing multipurpose jacket that is "designed by film crews for film crews" — the Field Production System or FPS. Three years in development and testing through a collaboration between director of photography Franz Pagot and Panavision, the FPS jacket combines useful safety features with a cleverly designed integral toolbox.

The jacket features cordura-reinforced shoulders that allow a provision for extra padding if required; utility pockets for a mobile phone, markers, sunglasses, etc.; a Velcro-fastening forearm protection pockets where elasticated bubble-type material provides extra protection; adjustable Velcro wrist straps; numerous D-rings to secure tools, flashlights and other equipment; bellow cargo pockets; specially shaped multi-purpose pockets to secure tools of the trade; two interior chest zip pockets; cordura-reinforced elbows; aircrew-style transparent map/callsheet compartment or erasable chinagraph note panel on the left forearm; a hands-free, close-quarter reflec-



tive flashlight pocket; a Walkie-Talkie pocket; a pens pocket with secret side pocket; and a shoulder-positioned Mag-Lite/torch holder for hands-free activity.

But wait, there's more. A detachable, highly visible safety lining with Reflexite bands zips out of the interior to wear by itself or over the FPS jacket. The removable exterior FPS jacket collar incorporates a scarf (choice of safety orange or black), a hood with storm flap, ear vents for greater audibility when wearing the stormhood, and a clear visor. The neck collar can be padded for extra comfort.

The jacket sleeves have two-stage detachable zip segments with rain deflectors. All zippers are corrosion-free, lightweight zips. All snaps are of the non-scratch, rubberized press-stud variety. Extra-strong microstitched seams prevent water ingress. The FPS jacket's highly breathable, easy-to-clean, tear-resistant Robertex material is waterproof to 1 bar of pressure. Total weight of the jacket is 2.3 kg, the same as a loaded 400' 35mm magazine.

The exterior waistband section can be unzipped and used as a bean bag or steadybag by filling the two bellows pockets. The jacket also comes with a choice of sandbag or changing bag



stowed in the rear compartment. An ID flap on the rear of the jacket tucks away when not required, and the FPS jacket is a fully adjustable unisex design.

The FPS jacket is the result of rigorous testing by cinematographers, grips and camera assistants, and its patented modular design makes it a true multipurpose tool in hot, cold or wet conditions both day and night.

For more information, contact Zero-G at +44(0)7071 707 770, fax +44(0)20 7561 0404, e-mail: fpsjacket@zero-gfilms.com, Web site: www.zero-gfilms.com.

Commercial Post

Post Logic Studios has spun off its Santa Monica, California, location into an independent entity called Creo (Latin for "to create"), catering primarily to the commercial world but also to trailers, music videos and promos. The new entity is headed by managing director Katie Wells.

Barry Snyder, president and CEO of Post Logic, says, "Katie has fashioned an innovative and collaborative boutique operation, with a superb staff of creative talent boasting a lengthy list of impressive credits. It is her vision to make Creo a cutting-edge facility that can become a partner with the creator agencies from the inception of a project. We at Post Logic are delighted with the team she has assembled and her goals for Creo."

Notes Wells, "The way we work is simple: we strive to be the digital effects house which says to the client, 'This is how we will fulfill your vision!' rather than imposing limitations. We will partner in the process every step of the way, with all of our staff bringing their unique area of expertise to bear on the projects. The resources required to complete any assignment to the total

satisfaction of a client will be immediately available on every job."

Creo has already completed work on spots for Nokia and MCI and the trailer for the feature film Spiderman for Sony Pictures. A large staff of craftspeople has been assembled at Creo, and the facility has been upgraded, including complete 3-D animation and tracking departments.

Telecine remains a service provided in the Santa Monica facility with a 2K da Vinci Color Enhancement System and Power Windows. The creative team includes senior colorist Chris Devlin, colorist Mario Barrera.

Creo remains in the Post Logic family and maintains its digital tie to the Hollywood facility for the convenience of Westside clients.

Creo, a division of Post Logic, (310) 315-9553, fax (310) 315-3073, Web site: www.postlogic.com.

Reach For the Stars

Munich-based Panther GmbH has introduced the new Galaxy crane system to the USA. The Galaxy reaches a height of 49' (15m) and carries a payload of 143 lbs. (65kg) in the longest remote version, with a remarkable arm length of 57' (17.5m). The longest platform version reaches 38.5' (11.8m), holding a payload of 400 lbs (180kg). A total of 10 versions offer operators and cinematographers a whole range of possibilities.

The concept and the design of the Galaxy incorporates ideas and input from



rental houses and crane operators, as well as Panther's extensive experience in crane construction. Safety and stability, as well as easy, comfortable handling were the prime objectives.

The newly developed Mammoth Base has a four-wheel drive and measures 6'x6' (1.8x1.8m) in dimension. Optional twin wheels offer additional safety.

The setup is easy, as all outriggers have the same length. This "modular" principle can be found again in the bracing kit and balance rods, turning the buildup into a simple and time-saving exercise. No tools are needed because all outriggers and rods are quickly connected and held safely in place by locking pins. The weight basket offers two connector plates and can be attached either at the top or at the bottom, according to the individual requirements. The newly designed "Multi-link" connectors of the outriggers facilitate buildup and takedown, because jamming is not possible.

Utmost stability and stiffness were the primary objectives of the crane arm. The outrigger has a remarkable cross-section of 10"x10" (25cm) to be strong enough against torsion. The position of the bracing kit, especially the V-trapezoid, offer optimal four-sided stability, ideal to dampen the vibration of the arm, particularly during remote operation. All remote versions are operational up to a wind speed of 45km/h.

The use of special, non-corroding bearings in the central section facilitates precision rotation. The weight reduction of up to 35 percent, as well as the ergonomic shape of the aluminium profile, makes the handling easy and comfortable. The central section weighs only 108 lbs (49 kg).

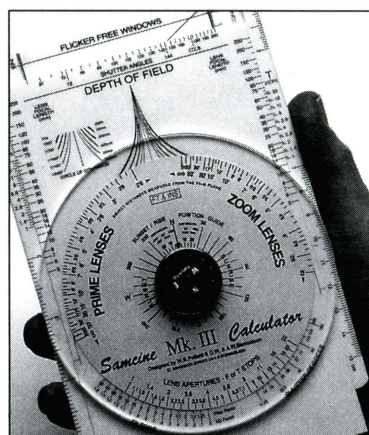
The aluminium surface of the Galaxy crane is hard-coated with powder coat. Only non-corroding, high-quality steel is used. Like all Panther products, the Galaxy is black in color to avoid possible reflections on location.

As a special service, Panther offers tailor-made outriggers in different lengths according to customer specifications and requirements.

For more information, contact Panther GmbH, Munich at: +49-89 613 900-01; fax +49-89 613 1000; e-mail: contact@panther-gmbh.de; Web site: www.panther-gmbh.de. In the U.S. only, contact: Scott Howell at CineMoves, (941) 809-9000.

Necessary Calculations

David Samuelson's new Samcine Mk III is now available. Used by virtually every film cameraman and camera assistant in the world, the calculator's primary function is to determine the depth of acceptable focus, taking into



consideration the focal length of the lens in use, the lens aperture and other parameters. The Mk III has many new features incorporated into the original design to make it more precise and to extend its usefulness.

New features include two additional circle-of-confusion curves of $1/1400$ " and $1/200$ " (0.018 and 0.012mm) to suit modern high-definition lenses. All curves are now alternately colored red and black for easy identification. Lens focal length markings have been updated to suit today's commonly used lenses. Depth-of-field distance markings are easier to read. Both Imperial and Metric discs are supplied. An HMI flicker-free windows chart (50 and 60Hz) has been added. A compass has been incorporated into the central disc locking mechanism with magnetic-variation markings and sunrise/sunset tables are included in the instruction booklet. (Northern or Southern Hemisphere must be specified when ordering or purchasing). Super 35

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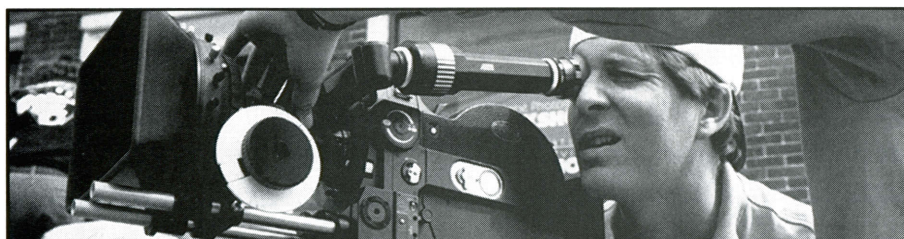
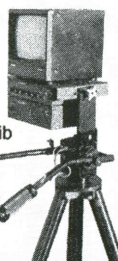
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and 2/3" video formats are now included in the reverse-side field-of-view nomogram. Close-up magnification and exposure guides (35mm Academy format) have been added. Ruler markings of 6" and 15cm have also been added, and a soft carrying pouch with belt loop has been included for good measure.

The Mk III retains its standard features, including: separate depth-of-field calculations for both prime and zoom lenses; hyperfocal distance, focus split, minimum aperture and maximum focal length calculations; exposure compensation calculations for light (footcandles and lux), camera speeds (1-2,500 fps), filters (filter factors and ND) and shutter angles (12.5-200 degrees); 16mm and 35mm film running-time calculations (24 and 25fps/ seconds/feet and meters); field-of-view nomogram for all 16mm and 35mm formats and for 2/3" video; and feet/metric distance conversions.

The Samcine Mk III Calculator is available at your nearest camera expendables store or rental house, as well as the ASC Web site at www.cine-matographer.com.

SuperFly, the Cam With a Plan

Garrett Brown, ASC has invented the new SuperFlyCam, the most compact and lightweight stabilized point-to-point flying cinema camera system available. SuperFlyCam offers almost unlimited operating flexibility and stability from inches above the ground to any height the riggers can manage for spans up to 1,000'. At speeds from one to 35 mph, the camera remains stable, and the altitude can be varied within shots.

SuperFlyCam made its feature debut on Danny Devito's *Death to Smoochy*, where SuperFlyCam's cable spanned over 500' to capture the lead characters in a dreamlike fantasy scene. Cirque de Soleil riggers flew the actors 30' in the air while the SuperFlyCam tracked the action.

The camera rig weighs just 29 pounds and measures 32" high by 20" wide by 17" deep in an open, vertical triangle configuration. The integral SL35

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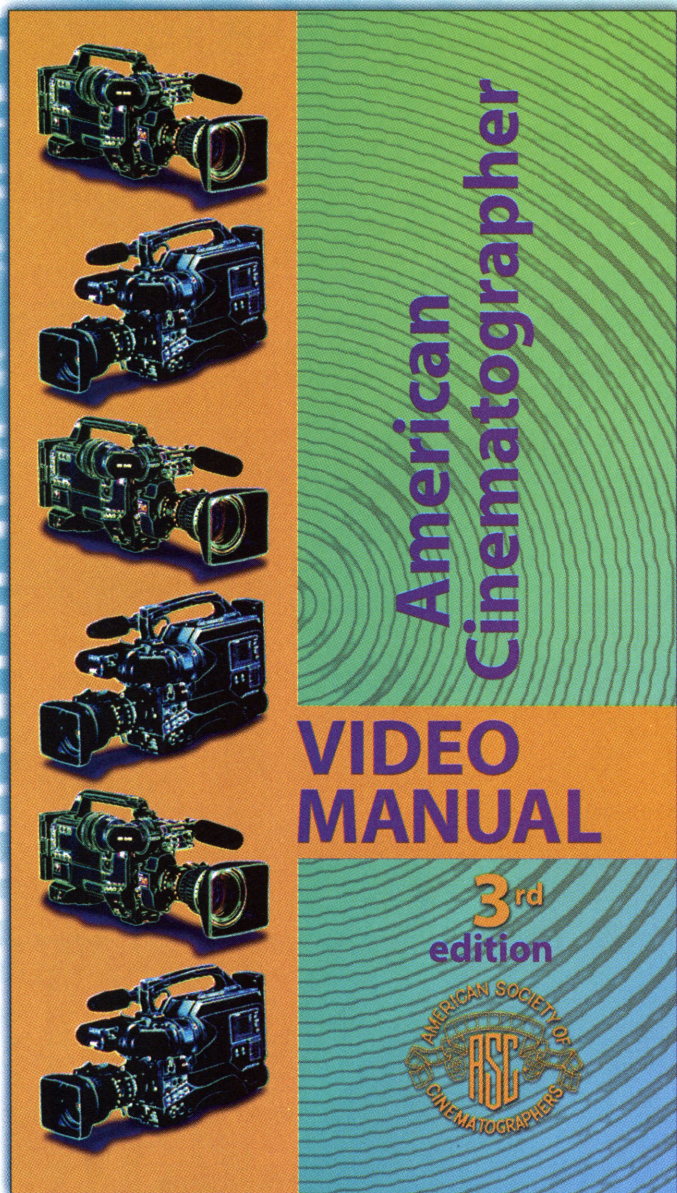
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REFERENCE: Includes photographs, charts, diagrams, schematics and a comprehensive glossary.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Michael Grotticelli is uniquely qualified to edit this book. He has been covering the professional video industry for more than 12 years. His credits include: Technology/New Media Editor at Broadcasting & Cable; Editor of Television Broadcast; News /Technology Editor of TV Technology; and Managing Editor of Videography.



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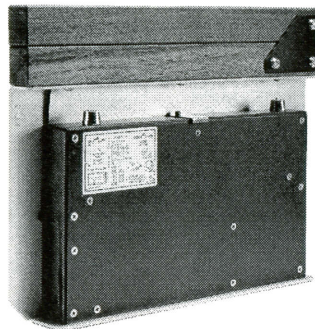
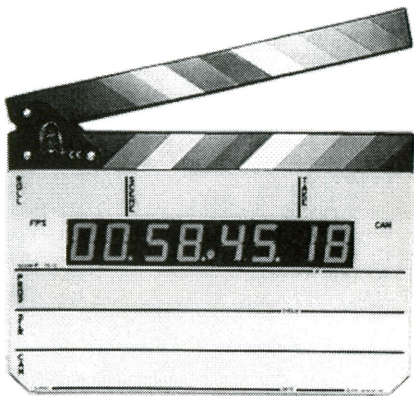
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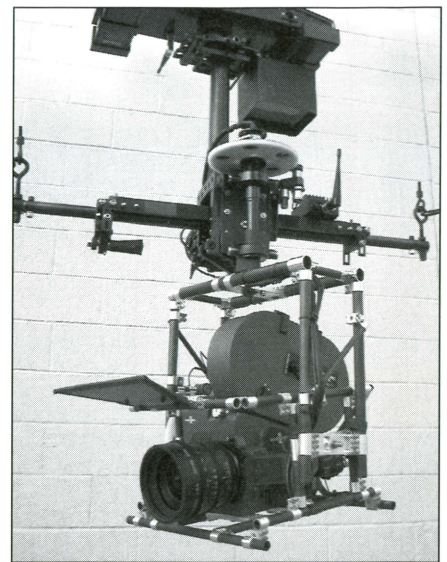
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camera can be equipped with either the Century/Canon 17-35mm, Century/Minolta 28-70mm or the Panavision 17.5-34.5mm lightweight zoom lens. The system includes all remote functions such as camera run, pan, tilt, focus, and iris. Video assist is transmitted by laser or microwave.

The cable rigging is similar to an endless clothesline to drive the camera along a single strong support wire. If the cable is coated, operation is silent otherwise the system is relatively quiet. Cable selection is made based upon specific shot requirements such as length of span, sound constraints, site and rigging necessities.

SuperFlyCam comes with a trained "pilot," or technician, who directs the rigging and operates the flying equipment. Despite its many functions and flexibility features, setup and wrap time is swift and easy. A second version, VideoFlyCam, is also available. Both SuperFlycam and VideoFlyCam are available worldwide out of Philadelphia and Munich.

For more information, contact Pat Hally at (610) 430-7557, e-mail: PatHally@aol.com, or visit www.garrettcam.com. ■

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Points East

Maysles Spots Creates Ads With Edge

by Eric Rudolph

Today, aficionados of unconventional cinematography can enjoy a variety of striking visuals simply by flipping on their television sets, because mainstream commercials are showcasing some of the more unusual and dramatic photographic techniques in filmmaking today. Sudden frame-speed ramping, unusual lighting strategies, offbeat post treatments and bold, multiple flash-frames are just a few of the visual treats one can review daily with a punch of the remote control.

A leading New York-based proponent of this edgier approach to selling products via the tube is director David McNamara of Maysles Shorts, which carries on the documentary tradition of Albert and the late David Maysles via high-profile TV commercials. A former still photographer who shot and directed his own commercials for the first five years of his more than decade-long career, McNamara now works primarily with cinematographer Karl Hahn.

"We've been pushing the envelope quite a bit lately," McNamara says of his work with Hahn, "mainly because we're going up against European directors who have more opportunities for visual expression." He adds that the oft-cited media saturation of modern America is also a factor driving them to seek out eye-catching visual techniques. "You're trying to get people's attention for 30 seconds to sell them beer. We try to ensure that our spots are visually strong in order to make people want to stick around and see what happens next."

Echoing a number of other cinematographers, Hahn notes that the chance to try out unusual photographic techniques is one of the benefits of shooting commercials. "You get the opportunity to experiment and use techniques from the back of your mind, and [the more adventurous spots] are the real banner pieces that invariably end up on your reel."

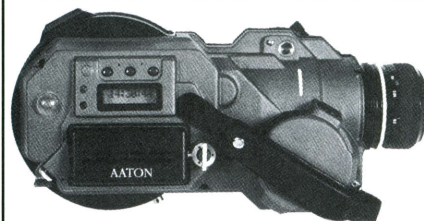
McNamara conceives many of these unusual looks by getting to know the people he so often uses as onscreen talent. "I put myself in their minds and then try to visually translate what I know about their personalities or predicaments," he explains. For example, in a recent Firestone tire spot

"We've been pushing the envelope quite a bit lately."

featuring race driver Mario Andretti, McNamara (working in this case with feature cinematographer Michael Chapman, ASC) employed a high-speed Photosonics camera and post manipulation to achieve frame-rate ramping effects in a tight moving shot of a speeding race car. He changed the car's onscreen speed suddenly and dramatically to provide a contrast with the surprisingly calm demeanor Andretti displays when he's off the track.

In a recent Firestone spot shot by Hahn, images of factory workers

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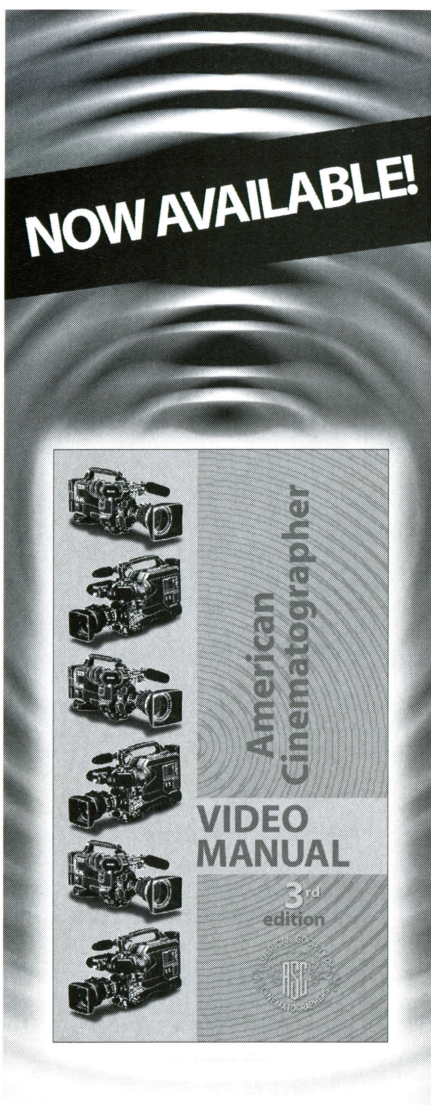
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progress from heavy blur to sharp focus; the method was essentially a rack focus with only one in-focus point instead of two or more. "I like film to feel like film," McNamara says. "That onscreen focusing technique has such a great optical feel to it. You're literally seeing the lens rotate."

McNamara and Hahn's Firestone commercial is a microcosm of their approach. While working on the spot, they utilized a 4'-diameter ring light, still-photo strobe lights, time lapse, frame-rate ramping, dramatic multiple flash-frames and the aforementioned rack-focus technique. To wrap Firestone's CEO in direct, straightforward illumination, Hahn obtained a huge ring light fitted with eight or more daylight-balanced Photofloods from Citation Support Inc., a lighting-rental firm in Nashville (where the spot was shot at a Firestone plant). The ring light was used straight on, surrounding the lens. "We diffused it and added some correction and accent lighting," Hahn explains. "We even rigged the ring light to a dolly with speedrail for moving shots. It was dimmable, so we could balance it with the factory lighting. It gave us a simple, portrait-like feel."

Still-photo strobe lights were used to illuminate and add visual energy to an otherwise routine shot of tires moving across a conveyor. "I'd wanted to use strobe lights for a long time," Hahn notes. Four special Broncolor units, chosen for their fast recycling time, were flown in, and the cinematographer ran tests during which the strobes fired 32 times per second on low power. The units were eventually arranged in a simple setup around the conveyor and synced to fire on every other frame with the aid of a special cable made by New York's Camera Service Center. "We basically turned the Arriflex 435 into a still camera, and we were playing with time," Hahn notes. "The look, which we loved, reminded us of early cinema, and of Edward Muybridge's early motion studies." Background light and steam were added to further liven up the scene, and some of Hahn's favorite moments occurred when the strobes misfired,

which he felt made the shot even more interesting.

A former professional stills photographer, McNamara often employs techniques from that arena in his commercials. He notes that one stills-inspired effect, achieved variously with a bleach-bypassed negative or in post, approximates the palette of a duotone photograph (an early still-photography color process) by rendering images in "reds, greens and browns, and nothing else." This approach was used to lend an old-time, down-home feel to a PSA about a rural child urging his overweight mother to quit smoking.

For each spot, McNamara often creates his own alternative storyboards, which he calls photoboards, by shooting digital stills on location. He then manipulates the images digitally to approximate the look he imagines. This process helps the ad agency and client become comfortable with his approach, which he says often varies wildly from the agency's storyboards. The photoboards are also "a great way to communicate with a cinematographer, because you're giving him something visual," McNamara adds. Hahn contributes additional ideas and refinements when he is able to participate in scouts, and as production commences. According to the cinematographer, the employment of these unusual techniques is "simply a better way to tell story" in 30 seconds or less: "You place people in a setting you like, and then apply technology."

Moreover, a viewer does not need to be schooled in the visual arts for this approach to make an impact, as Hahn can attest: "My dad, who does not have a particularly sophisticated visual sense, much prefers watching my more adventurous commercials to the occasional spots I do that are taken straight from the agency storyboards."

Eric Rudolph can be reached via e-mail at erudolph2@nyc.rr.com. ■

Books in Review

by Ray Zone

**Italian Cinema
From Neorealism to
the Present (Third Edition)**

by Peter Bondanella
Continuum 544 pp., \$26.95
ISBN 0-8264-1247-5

This edition of Bondanella's book enlarges what has become the classic history text on Italian cinema. Eleven chapters from the second edition have been revised to incorporate recent scholarship, and an entirely new chapter, "The Italian Cinema Enters the Third Millennium," has been added.

Bondanella gives us a comprehensive history of Italian cinema that begins in November 1895, when Filoteo Alberini applied for a patent on a Kinetograph. The first films produced for commercial use in Italy appeared a year later. Like the films of the Lumière brothers, early Italian films such as *King Umberto* and *Margherita of Savoy Strolling in the Park* were brief documentaries.

Giovanni Pastrone's 1914 epic *Cabiria*, adapted from a novel by Gabriele D'Annunzio, had a great influence on the silent era and particularly D.W. Griffith, who subsequently created work on a similarly large scale. Historical extravaganzas proliferated in Italian cinema in the early years and put the country's film industry on the cultural map. World War I devastated the Italian industry, but just before the war a star system featuring female stars, or *dive* ("goddesses"), had emerged. During Italy's fascist era from 1922 to 1943, the influence of the star system and "D'Annunzianism" mitigated against realism in cinema. There was a fixation on unreal subject matter and the past, which produced a real effect at the box office as film produc-

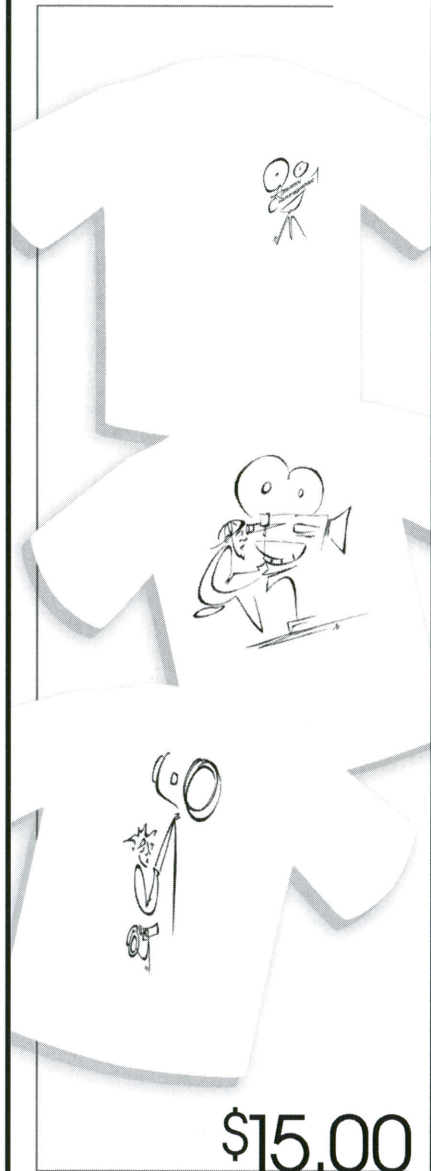
tion declined.

By the 1940s, the influence of American realistic fiction began to be seen in Italy, in particular with Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (*Obsession*), which was based on the James M. Cain novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Visconti's film, with its use of naturalistic time and real surroundings, was not well received by censors and government officials, who destroyed the original negative. Bondanella considers the film "a turning point in the history of the Italian cinema While it is neither a film about wartime experiences, partisans or social problems, nor one in which nonprofessional actors and a documentary-like style are employed — traits often considered to be central to any neorealist film — it prepared Italian filmmakers, if not the Italian public or the critics, for an entirely different intellectual and aesthetic climate in which to work."

Critics and film scholars generally acknowledge the importance of Italian Neorealism in the evolution of cinema. Essentially, a neorealist film rejected traditional cinematic conventions, used locations rather than studio sets, and employed documentary effects and nonprofessional actors. Most importantly, neorealist filmmakers shunned the manipulation of reality in the cutting room and respected the duration of real time as it elapsed in actual time onscreen.

The three early masters of Italian Neorealism were Visconti, Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica. Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) is the acclaimed masterpiece that inaugurated neorealism in the postwar era. "It so completely reflected the moral and psychological atmosphere of this historical moment," says Bondanella, "that it

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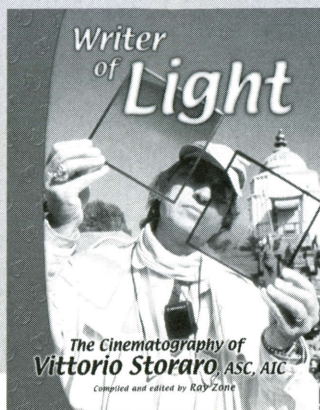
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alerted both the public and the critics to a new direction in Italian film." *Rome, Open City* was shot on film stock bought on the black market, and it was developed without the benefit of daily rushes. The story relates the struggles of Partisans and the tragedies suffered by Italians during the German occupation in a daring mix of moods and styles.

Though Visconti's film ranked first at the Italian box office in 1945-46, the majority of the early neorealist classics, including Rossellini's *Paisan*, De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* and De Santis' *Bitter Rice*, were critical and commercial failures in their native country. The export market for their works kept these innovative filmmakers in business at a time when they were creating an authentic image of Italy in a new cinematic language.

Fast-Talking Dames

by Maria DiBattista
Yale University Press
368 pp., \$27.95
ISBN 0-300-08815-9

Writing this book was a labor of love for its author. Because of the "unique company of women" celebrated in this book, DiBattista "came to experience the pleasure to be had in words If I had not had their example, I might have passed my adolescence muttering that there was little hope for me in a world that paid so much attention to the likes of Marilyn Monroe."

On the TV screen, DiBattista encountered the sassy ladies in screwball comedies of the 1930s and 1940s. "They seemed to know what to say and when to say it," she writes. "They weren't afraid of slang nor shy of the truth." When talking pictures proliferated in the early 1930s, a new style of heroine replaced the wordless vamps and sirens of the silent cinema. The fast-talking dames in these films were self-sufficient, smart and important figures in what Robert Benchley termed the "voice culture" of early talkies.

Carole Lombard, Claudette Colbert, Myrna Loy, Jean Arthur, Constance Bennett, Barbara Stanwyck,

Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis and Rosalind Russell are the preeminent stars celebrated in DiBattista's entertaining book. Films such as *Twentieth Century* (1934), *The Thin Man* (1934), *It's a Wonderful World* (1939), *His Girl Friday* (1940) and *The Lady Eve* (1941) "paved a way for a new class or sort of woman who finally would answer to no one but herself," she writes.

The screenwriters who gave us the "satiric irreverence" of the screwball comedies were city slickers from New York and Chicago, habitués of saloons and pressrooms, refugees from the Algonquin Hotel. For example, Ben Hecht, who scripted *Twentieth Century* and *It's a Wonderful World*, wrote in the "colorful urban dialect" of Chicago. "The language of the times was fast and pungent," writes DiBattista, "and to survive you had to learn how to speak it."

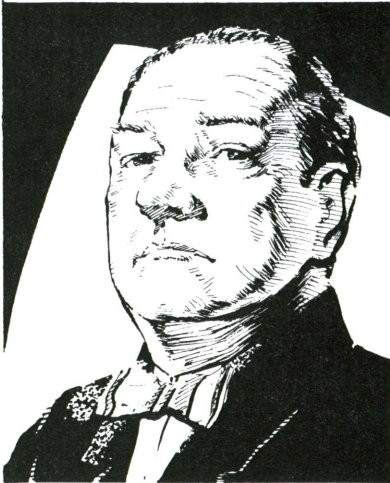
The American slang at the heart of the fast talk onscreen was flippant and cynical, "the standard-bearer of a cocksure, exuberant modernity," much of which was derived from the world of the gangster. Howard Hawks' *Ball of Fire* (1941), starring Gary Cooper as a prissy professor who learns slang from fast-talking Barbara Stanwyck's Sugarpuss O'Shea, is a classic screwball tour-de-force on American vernacular, juxtaposing the language of the street with that of the academy.

DiBattista finds that fast talk on screen today has little value, and that "laconic manhood is still rated high as a masculine ideal." She characterizes her book as "a call to lure the young out of the verbal ghetto" of "mall-speak," which has become a kind of standardized dialect for imprecise expression. This well-illustrated and well-informed book celebrates "the verbal muses of a period in American history when language, as well as political institutions of democratic culture, were reinventing themselves." What these muses said in their time is still amusing today. "These women were of their time but ahead of it, too," the author concludes. "If we are lucky, we can still catch up with them." ■

THE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

by Ray Zone & Chuck Roblin

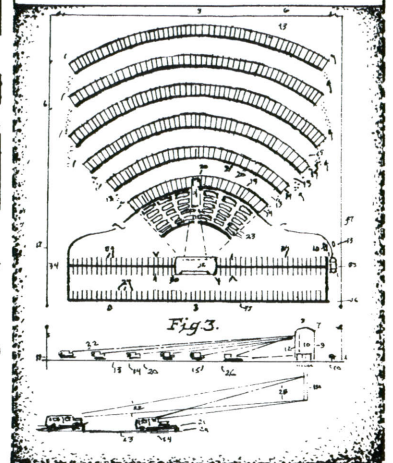
RICHARD HOLLINGSHEAD JR. INVENTED THE DRIVE-IN THEATER IN 1932.



ON JUNE 6, 1935, HOLLINGSHEAD OPENED THE FIRST OPEN-AIR MOVIE THEATER IN CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY.



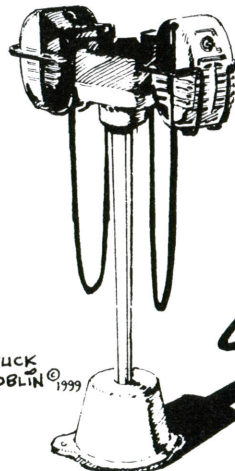
HOLLINGSHEAD HAD APPLIED FOR AND BEEN GRANTED A PATENT FOR "A NEW AND USEFUL OUTDOOR THEATER."



AT FIRST LARGE SPEAKERS NEAR THE SCREEN PROJECTED SOUND TO DRIVE-IN PATRONS.

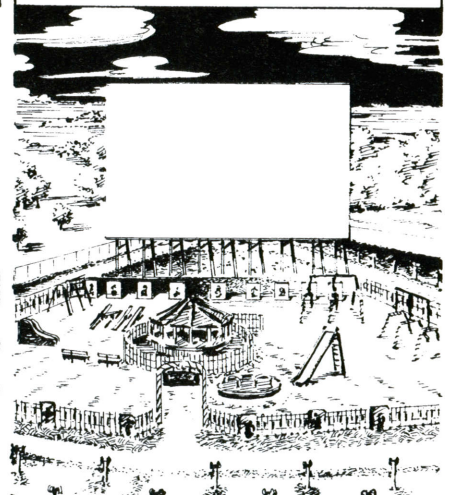


BY 1946, THE RCA IN-CAR SPEAKER WAS USED.



CHUCK ROBBLIN © 1999

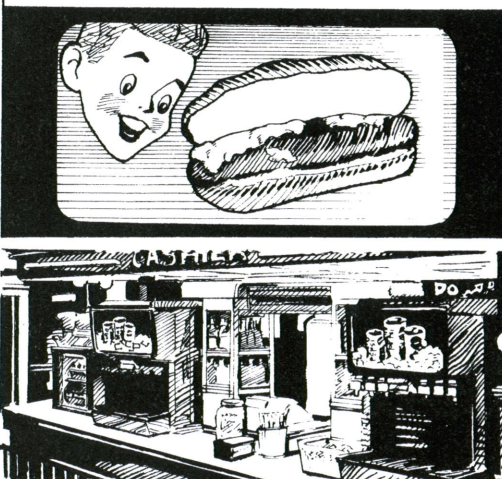
MANY DRIVE-IN THEATERS HAD PLAYGROUNDS FOR CHILDREN.



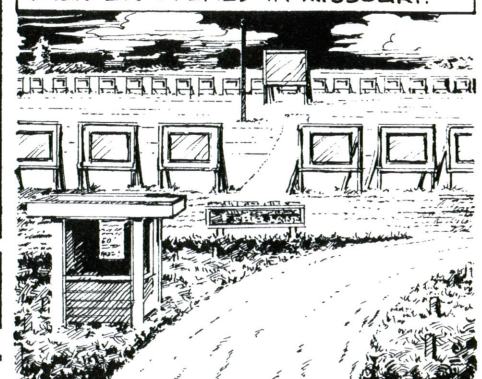
SOME DRIVE-IN THEATERS PROVIDED REFRESHMENT SERVICE TO CARS.



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IN THE 1950'S, THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE DRIVE-IN, A PRIVATE SCREEN THEATER OPENED IN MISSOURI.



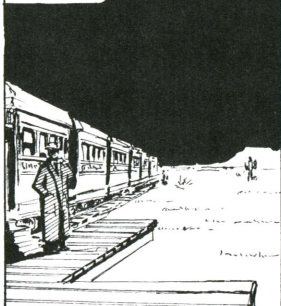
DRIVE-INS HAVE SINCE DECLINED, BUT BY 1999, 800 OF THEM STILL ARE OPEN.

Next Month

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HEAD OUT WEST.



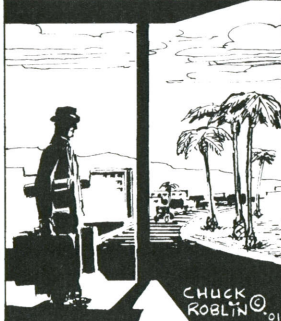
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MORE TO HIS LIKING.**



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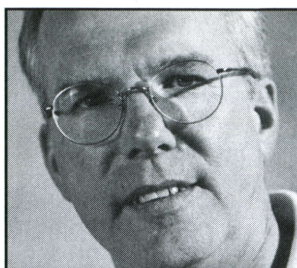
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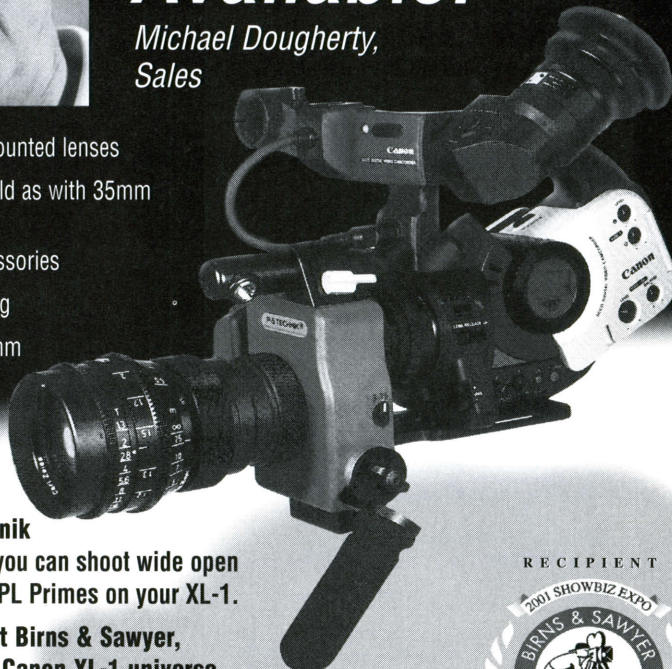
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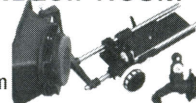
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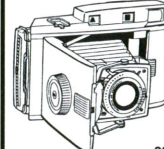
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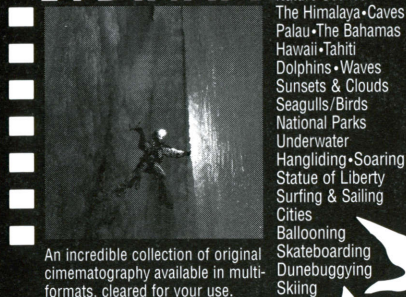
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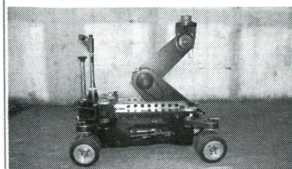
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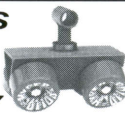
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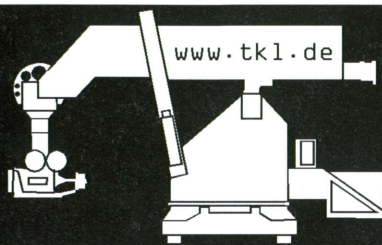
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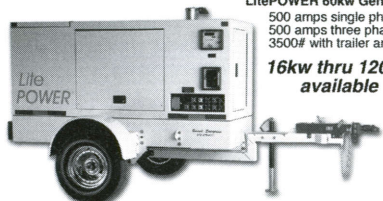
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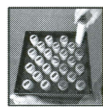
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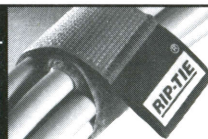
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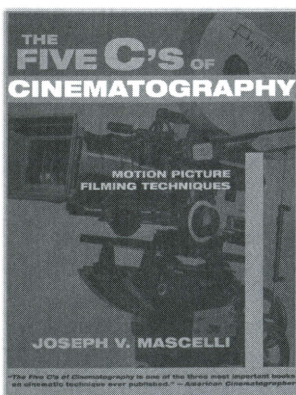
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- 16X9 Inc. 89
- AAS 119
- Aaton RG 46, 47
- Academy of Art College 14
- Aerocrane USA 4
- Airstar America 73
- AC 25, 90, 92, 93, 99,
100, 102, 104,
105, 111, 112,
114, 116, 122,
123, 126, 127
- Arriflex 5
- Backstage Equipment 65
- Beachtek International 121
- Benjamin Centoducati 123
- Birns & Sawyer 45, 119
- Bogen Photo 43
- Boston Camera 106
- Bron Electronik 31
- Burrell Enterprise 121
- Cameralmage 17
- Canon Video 8,9
- Cases4less.com 121
- Cavision 121
- Century Precision Optics 6
- Chambless Productions 119
- Chapman/Leonard Studio
Equipment Inc. 65
- Chimera 30
- Cine Magic Int'l, Inc. 72
- Cine Materials 123
- Cine Video Tech 73
- Cinekinetic 86
- Cinema Engineering
Company 119
- Cinematography
Electronics 81
- Cinequipt 88
- Clairmont 13
- Cooke 55
- Coptervision 91
- Creative Planet 97
- David Samuelson 87
- Denecke 112
- Doggicam 82
- DTC/Custer Avenue Stages
119
- Eastman Kodak C2, 1, 2, 39
- Film Emporium, Inc. 121
- Filmtools 121
- Fisher Light/Fisher
Productions 27
- Flying-Cam 42
- Foto Kern 37
- Four Designs 119
- Fuji Motion Picture 23
- Fujinon 79
- Full Sail 7
- Glidecam Industries 100
- Greg Hensley Productions
119
- Hollywood Reporter, The 121
- Home Video Studio 121
- HydroFlex, Inc. 98
- International Film &
Television Workshop 110
- Isaia & Company 66
- J.L. Fisher Inc. 20
- JBK Cinequipt 119
- JEM Studio Lighting Inc. 113
- K&H Products 64, 121
- K5600, Inc. 44
- Kino Flo 75
- Koerner Camera Systems 18
- Kupo Co. Ltd. 28
- LDI 71
- Lee Utterbach 113
- Lentequip 123
- Lightline Electronics 96
- Lighttools 29
- Location Lighting 121
- London International
Film School 80
- Los Angeles Film School 54
- Lewel Light Mfg. Company
15
- MacGillivray-Freeman 120
- Matthews Studio
Equipment 10
- Miller Camera Support, LLC
120
- Miller Fluid Heads,
Australia 53
- Mole-Richardson 83
- Movie Tech/ABC Products 57
- Moviola 123
- Musco Mobile 80
- Nalpak 20
- NCS Products 121
- Nevada Film Commission 18
- New York Film Academy 41
- New York University 103
- Optex International 121
- Optex 42, 86, 96
- Orlando Film Festival 88
- Orphanage, The 67
- Otto Nemenz Intl. 51
- Panther 81, 120
- Prosource 121
- Rip-Tie Company 121
- Sachtler 61
- Schneider Optics, Inc. 11
- Schumacher Camera 21
- Sekonic C3
- Serious Gear Co. 98
- Shooting in the
Philippines 123
- Shotmaker Dollies &
Cranes, Inc. 74
- Slow Motion 16
- Stanton Video Services
110
- Ste-Man 102
- Ste-Man/Horizon 123
- Technological Cine Video
105
- Thomson Multi Media
19
- Tiffen C4
- TKL, The Motion Control
Factory 121
- Toscana Film
Commission 63
- Transvideo International
53
- Tyler Camera Systems 6
- Vancouver Film School
106
- Vantage 109
- Varizoom Lenses
Controls 123
- Visual Products 123
- Weatherstock 121
- Whitehouse Audio
Visual 123
- Wide Screen Software
121
- Willy's Widgets 121
- ZGC 42, 55, 86, 96, 104,
109

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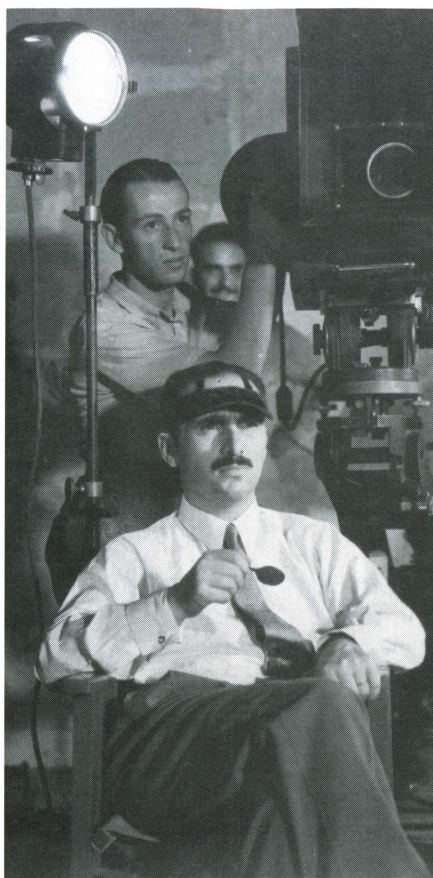
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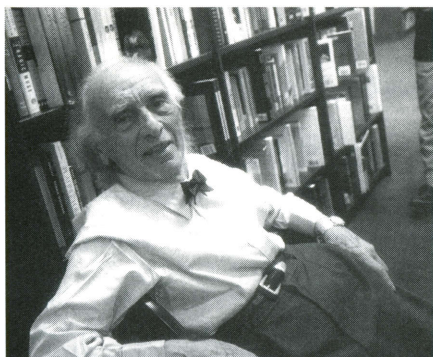
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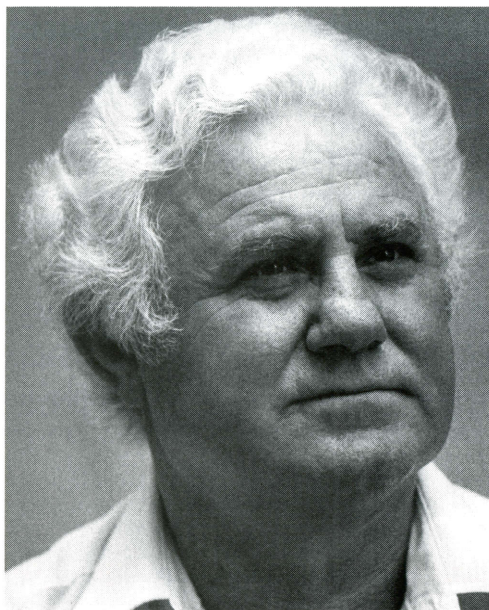


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In Memoriam



James F. Liles, ASC, whose visual work had an indelible effect on several classic award-winning feature films, died on August 10, 2001, at the age of 78 in Woodland Hills, California.

Born on February 24, 1923, in the Flat River/Rivermines area of Missouri, Liles, known in his youth as "Tiger" Liles, was a Golden Gloves boxer before joining the Merchant Marines during World War II.

Following the war, he migrated to Los Angeles and went to work for Technicolor in 1946 as a negative cutter. He also handled soundtrack control, registration control and color control duties during his 10-year tenure. After leaving Technicolor, Liles became general manager of Studio Film Service's special effects department, which eventually led to his joining MGM's special optical effects department in 1961 as an assistant to Robert Hoag, ASC. Upon Hoag's retirement in 1973, Liles assumed the department's top position as director of photography-special photographic effects. He spent more than 20 years at MGM.

During his more than 40-year career in motion pictures, Liles had a

hand in award-winning effects work on *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which won an Oscar for best effects-special visual effects, *Logan's Run*, which earned an Academy Special Achievement Award for visual effects, and *King Kong*, which also was recognized with a Special Achievement Award.

Liles also did special optical work on *Dr. Zhivago*, *That's Entertainment!* and *That's Entertainment, Part II*, and *Demon Seed*. He also handled episodes of the television series *Man From Atlantis*.

Director-producer Harrison Engle, who worked with Liles during the 1970s, "greatly admired his dedication and craftsmanship as a cinematographer. He was a kind man and a true professional."

A memorial service was held at the ASC Clubhouse on August 18. Liles is survived by his wife, Mary; son, James; daughter, Kathy Liles Booth; brother, Ira; sister, Margaret Hayes; stepson, Mike Van Triffin; and numerous grandchildren, cousins, nieces and nephews.

— Douglas Bankston

From the Clubhouse



Dible Keynotes Conference

George Spiro Dible, ASC gave the keynote speech on July 31 at the 55th Annual University Film and Video Association (UFVA) Conference in Rochester, New York. Dible, who is the president of the International Cinematographer Guild, kicked off the conference, which was attended by some 300 delegates, including deans and key faculty members from hundreds of film schools in the United States.

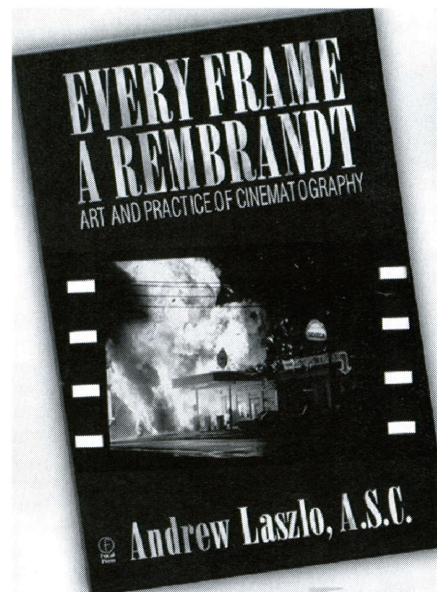
"If you are teaching your students that technology is a substitute for art, or for hard work, you are fooling yourself and them," he told attendees. "If you want your students to succeed, teach them that this is a collaborative art form where the best storytellers who work hard have a chance to succeed. The others will fail."

Dible cautioned the educators not to be fooled by vendors and "charlatans," who are claiming that anyone can make movies alone without any lighting by pointing a digital camera at actors. "There are fundamental things your students must learn, whether they want to be writers, directors or cinematographers," he noted. "They need to learn that you light for aesthetic reasons and not to merely properly expose the tape or film. They will only learn that from experience."

It is important for you to teach them that there are no successful auteurs, because no one makes a great film alone. Every one of your students needs to learn that filmmaking is another form of literature, but it is a collaborative process where everyone plays a role."

The director of photography also touched on a range of issues that could affect the future generation of filmmakers, including "runaway production," which, he pointed out, is draining jobs from the U.S. Dible explained that while top directors, actors and cinematographers are working on those films abroad, many others are excluded, including recent graduates.

UFVA president Bob Bassett, who heads the film department at Chapman University in Orange, California, says Dible was asked to keynote the conference to provide UFVA members with a realistic view of what the future holds for their students, and also to offer guidelines for enriching film school curriculums. The UFVA was founded in 1946 mainly by military veterans who produced training and other films for military services during World War II and wanted a venue to screen and discuss their works. Within a few years, the main agenda shifted to sharing ideas about training future filmmakers. ■



This book examines the art and craft of motion-picture photography through a veteran professional cinematographer's personal experiences on five major motion pictures, each selected to illustrate a particular series of challenges for the photographer.

CONTENTS: Southern Comfort; The Warriors; First Blood; Streets of Fire; Innerspace

ISBN 024080399X : 240pp :
6 x 9.25 In. : 12 color photos :
39 b/w photos : 6 line illustrations :

Softcover : June 2000 :

US\$34.95

www.cinematographer.com

WRAP SHOT



The films *Gaslight* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* used moody lighting to underscore characters' varying mental states.

The gaslight era was celebrated with a cycle of 1940s films that were, to say the least, melodramatic. The Victorian era — the age of the gaslight — heralded the birth of the modern horror film; it was, after all, the era that gave us characters such as Jack the Ripper, Dorian Gray and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Cinema itself began in the gaslight era, and it has been noted that the light of the very first films was gaslight, not electricity, and that the machinery to drive the

film was cranked by hand.

The 1944 MGM film *Gaslight* is a classic melodrama that made brilliant use of lighting, which alternated between dim and bright to convey the varying mental states of the main character. The film was based on a 1938 play by Patrick Hamilton titled *Gas Light: A Victorian Thriller*. A British film adaptation directed by Thorold Dickinson was released in 1940, but was subsequently suppressed by MGM when its own version was produced. (The British film was later released in the United States under the title *Angel Street*.)

Gaslight features a husband (insidiously played by Charles Boyer) who attempts to convince his wife (Ingrid Bergman, in an Oscar-winning performance) that she is going insane. Ten years previously, the husband had murdered his wife's aunt as he was attempting to locate a set of valuable jewels. Directed by George Cukor and shot in vivid black-and-white by Joe

Ruttenberg, ASC, the film features deep-focus cinematography that greatly heightens the suspense.

The filmmakers stage numerous scenes using gaslight, which creates subtle lighting changes and shadows on Bergman's face that mirror the emotional strain she endures as her evil husband torments her. Deep-focus photography is used brilliantly in a scene in which a Scotland Yard inspector (Joseph Cotten) surreptitiously watches the unhappy couple from the background at a piano recital. Numerous nighttime exterior scenes convey the light of the gas lamps in thick London fog.

Ruttenberg was no stranger to the gaslight era, having shot *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for director Victor Fleming in 1941; this classic version starred Spencer Tracy as the schizoid physician and Ingrid Bergman as Ivy, a hapless barmaid. In one brilliant sequence near the end of the film, Jekyll walks through fog next to gas lamps and gradually changes into Hyde. The sight of his black silhouette as he walks into a foggy distance effectively conveys the engulfment of his soul.

Edgar Allan Poe, in his 1840 story "The Man of the Crowd," wrote that gaslight "threw over everything a fitful and garish lustre." But for Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it was electric light that was abhorrent. In an 1899 article titled "A Plea for Gas Lamps," Stevenson wrote of electric light that "a new sort of urban star now shines out nightly, horrible, unearthly, obnoxious to the human eye; a lamp for a nightmare!"

As late as 1888, on the eve of Jack the Ripper's first attack, the Whitechapel Board of Works was discussing the extension of gas lamps into the alleys and dead ends of London's streets.

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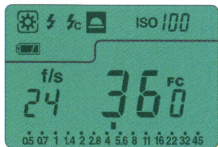
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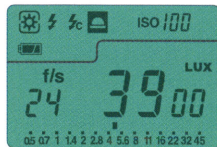
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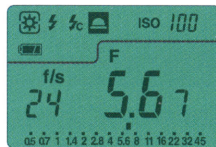
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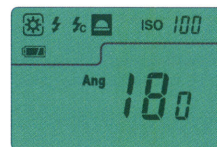
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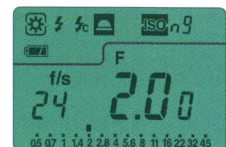
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